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# Long Island Education Review

**LONG ISLAND'S  
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FOR EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS**

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## **Inside this issue:**

- ◆ Dean Jerrold Ross, of St. John's University, offers Insights to Washington's Visions
- ◆ Prioritize Curriculum Structure
- ◆ Predictors of Academic Success in First Semester Baccalaureate Nursing Students
- ◆ Parental Involvement: Structures and Processes
- ◆ Give Them What They Want! Administrative Guidelines for Staff Development Based on Secondary Teachers' Learning Styles
- ◆ Out of the Mouths of Babes: Students "Voice" Their Opinions on Cyber-Bullying
- ◆ The Relationship of Parent Involvement and Early Childhood Education Programs to Literacy Acquisition in Preschool and Kindergarten Children
- ◆ The State of Music Education on Long Island, New York: Interviews with Four Music Directors
- ◆ Substitute Teachers: A Return to the Search for Meaningful Instruction in the Teacher's Absence

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# Contents

## Page

- ◆ Editor's Perspective: Washington's Stimulus Plan: A Focus  
On Advancing Reform Efforts 4  
- by Kevin N. McGuire, Ph.D.
- ◆ Opinion Center: 5  
Washington Slept Here  
- by Jerrold Ross, Ph.D.  
Applying Deming's System Theory to Education: Prioritize  
Curriculum Structure 6  
- by Thomas F. Kelly, Ph.D.
- ◆ Predictors of Academic Success in First Semester  
Baccalaureate Nursing Students (reprinted from Volume 37,  
issue 4 of the Journal of Social Behavior and Personality) 9  
- by Virginia Peterson-Graziosi
- ◆ Parental Involvement: Structures and Processes 13  
- by Korynne Taylor Dunlop, Ed.D.
- ◆ Give Them What They Want! Administrative Guidelines  
For Staff Development Based on Secondary Teachers'  
Learning Styles 20  
- by Dr. Diane B. Scricca
- ◆ Out of the Mouths of Babes: Students "Voice" Their Opinions  
on Cyber-Bullying 24  
- by Dr. Margaret Jackson, Dr. Wanda Cassidy, and Karen Brown
- ◆ The Relationship of Parent Involvement and Early Childhood  
Education Programs to Literacy Acquisition in Preschool and  
Kindergarten Children 31  
- by Phyllis Sterne
- ◆ The State of Music Education on Long Island, New York:  
Interviews with Four Music Directors 33  
- by Korynne Taylor-Dunlop, Ed.D.
- ◆ Substitute Teachers: A Return to the Search for Meaningful  
Instruction in the Teacher's Absence 39  
- by John A. Nidds, Ed.D.
- ◆ Book Review: Transforming Schools with Technology -  
How Smart Use of Digital Tools Helps Achieve Six Key  
Educational Goals - by Andrew A. Zucker 42  
- Reviewed by Charles W. Rudiger, Ed. D.

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## About SCOPE

SCOPE Education Services is a not-for-profit, private, voluntary organization permanently chartered by the New York State Board of Regents to provide services to school districts. Founded in 1964 by school superintendents, it is a cooperative venture for sharing resources to deal with common concerns. It is governed by a Board of Directors of school superintendents and college representatives and serves as a regional School Study Council and School Board Institute.

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## ***Future Themes for The Long Island Education Review:***

Ethics in Education  
CFE - Update, Perspectives  
No Child Left Behind  
Leadership - Teachers and Others

## **Editor's Perspective**

### **Washington's Stimulus Plan: A Focus on Advancing Reform Efforts**



Washington policy-makers have indicated that America faces few more urgent challenges than preparing children to compete in a global economy. President Obama and the Congress envision 21<sup>st</sup> century education characterized by more reform and accountability, coupled with the resources needed to carry out that reform, asking parents to take responsibility for their children's success, and recruiting, retaining and rewarding an army of new teachers to fill new successful schools that prepare children for success in college and the workforce ([www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/education](http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/education)).

This new initiative to advance student achievement has ambitious plans. The administration has called for merit pay for good teachers, encouragement for states to lift caps on the number of charter schools, implementation of a tough standardized-testing system and the establishment of statewide data banks that track how students are achieving, and by extension how well their teachers are performing.

While providing the largest appropriation in history for education, the U.S. Department of Education envisions a world class system centered on student learning characterized by research-based actionable practices. Numerous studies indicate that such a system will require a new and intense level of collaborative effort with all school partners learning and supporting one another.

The economic stimulus bill contains approximately \$100 billion exclusively for investment in education – an unprecedented amount. In past years, the Gates Foundation alone contributed more financial support to public education annually than the U.S. Office of Education had available for advancing reform efforts.

The Long Island Education Review is proud to have Dean Jerrold Ross, Dean of Education at St. John's University, share his views on how Washington has typically planned to advance civilization through improved education. Two fundamental elements of excellent schools are viable curriculum and planned professional development. These elements are addressed in articles entitled, "*Prioritize Curriculum Structure*" and "*Give Them What They Want*." In addition, we have reports about the important Washington initiative highlighting increased parental involvement in "*The Relationship of Parent Involvement and Early Childhood Education Programs*" and "*Parental Involvement: Structures and Processes*."

"*Predictors of Academic Success in First Semester Baccalaureate Nursing Students*" takes us into the world of preparation for success in the health profession. Two other contributions, "*Out of the Mouths of Babies*" and "*A Return to the Search for Meaningful Instruction*," present observations and opinions regarding cyber-bullying and substitute teaching, respectively. In addition, we have a research study highlighting the importance of the Arts on Long Island in, "*The State of Music Education on Long Island, New York: Interviews with Four Music Directors*." We hope you enjoy the issue.

*Kevin N. McQuire*, Editor

## OPINION CENTER

### ***Washington Slept Here*** - by Jerrold Ross, Ph.D.

No, I don't mean George Washington. It is Washington, D.C. and the U.S. Department of Education that have been asleep at the switch since the passage of the No Child Left Behind law in 2002. As I write, (October 13) the front page of the New York Times carries a story headed "Under 'No Child' Law, Even Solid Schools Falter."

The Times cites the law's insistence that an 11% annual gain in reading and mathematics be required of all schools, even in the face of reality, which history informs us, demonstrates that a 3-4% gain would be considered realistic.

But the real tragedy of the law is that by virtue of measuring the results of standardized testing in just two disciplines, law-makers, school administrators, teachers' unions, and some college education professors forget that many other fields impinge on the total education of the child. That forgetfulness is reminiscent of the sandman in "Hansel and Gretel" who puts the children to sleep in the woods by scattering sand and perhaps some stardust around them. They slumber on, oblivious of the danger that awaits them the next morning.

And so our leaders in Washington (and elsewhere) have also fallen victim to the mesmerizing assumption that stardust in one's eyes, which bring fleeting relaxation, is the academic equivalent of words and numbers in the eyes of our children.

The deleterious effect of all this is that the way children learn best, through the arts and humanities, is increasingly set aside by school systems who are held hostage (much as the Witch holds many children under her spell) by an unthinking and unfeeling piece of legislation and by an ill-informed public. This unfortunate attempt to raise the level of success in easily measurable areas also neglects the fact that schools are supposed to raise the level of human aspiration and guide children to meet their greatest potential through higher levels of understanding and response to the joys of childhood – their birthright – study and experience in song, dance, literatures, theatre, and art.

Those in control of educational policy, most of whom were also products of an education deficient in exposure to the arts and humanities, probably cannot be expected to make the right decisions regarding their children (and grandchildren) now in the schools. But this does not excuse their unwillingness to think about teaching and learning in a way other than standardized testing in just reading and mathematics.

Think of how we measure a great civilization. History tells us that it is through the production of ideas, of great centers of learning, of libraries, of institutions heavily illustrated by the arts, and of commentary on the social and economic issues of their times as written by great historians, that we have come to assess the contributions of civilizations of the past. But our present adherence to disciplines that can be partially captured by statistics ignores everything the literate person knows. I say "partially" because even the tests we used are often fatally flawed and lead to confusion among parents and school leaders as to just what they purport to measure accurately. (Think also of New York City's school report cards which have yet to produce valid and reliable data.)

Moreover, even artists and humanists have lost track of the reason for the necessity of including their fields in school curricula. The fact that they illuminate society, and that they both lead and reflect the goals of civilization, now has been replaced by short-term experiences in the classroom – no more than leading children to play aimlessly from time to time, without reference to the connection of the arts to the goals of a democratic society and/or the presence and realization of these goals in other societies at all times and in all places.

Those who should be transforming arts education into something more than it now represents show no signs of awakening to those virtues by which truly educated and successful people should be measured. Nothing short of a "gigantic leap", now sought only by proficiency in reading and mathematics, in every experience of childhood will cause the United States to rise to the level of an educated citizenry it once enjoyed. However, while the eyes of Washington (and Albany) in our time are closed to the lessons great civilizations through the ages have taught us, we can never dream of returning to world leadership in education.

The next administration in Washington may suffer a rude awakening as it inherits a society forgetful of its original intent, and an economy faltering for lack of imagination. We, in the profession of education, have a moral responsibility to shake them out of their lethargy by transforming every curricular means at our disposal to produce more informed leaders, and by transforming ourselves into more literate citizens. I had many great teachers, the best of whom used to say "...the children are limited by the limitations of their teachers." And so it is from this vantage point, peering ahead through a vision of the future, that our children will best be served.

Jerrold Ross, Ph.D., is the Dean of Education at St. John's University, Queens, New York.



## OPINION CENTER

# APPLY DEMING'S SYSTEM THEORY TO EDUCATION: PRIORITIZE CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

By Thomas F. Kelly, Ph. D.

Given the vast and ever increasing amount of knowledge that confronts us, we must recognize that everyone cannot learn everything. That sounds ridiculous but in fact it is the premise now driving the standards movement. The belief that all students can and should become experts in all subjects is absurd. Highly educated adults could not meet the current "standards" in all subject areas of high school. Yet that is the implicit requirement for all students. Since this is so, we need to set up a process for schools to use in prioritizing what is to be learned.

This can be done by asking three questions:

1. What knowledge and skills are **ESSENTIAL** for all students to master?
2. What knowledge and skills are **DESIRABLE** for all students to master?
3. What should we **DELETE** from current curriculum to create more time for that which is essential and enrichment?

The present educational system treats all knowledge as essential. We know this because it allocates time equally to various subjects by periods throughout the school day. When everything is a priority, nothing is a priority.

This brings us to a critical question. How can we define essential knowledge for all students? What criteria can we use? I suggest we call essential for all students only that knowledge which is consistently found in happy and successful people. Not that which is found in some of these people, but in all. If it is not found in all successful and happy people, it is not essential for all.

Since we can identify a common denominator of knowledge and skills in all of these people, we can begin to identify the knowledge and skills that are necessary for all students. We can safely assume if all happy and successful people possess this set of knowledge and skills then it is necessary for our students.

The Essential knowledge list will be dynamic. What was essential a hundred years ago may not be essential now. It may not have any relevance at all to today's culture. For example, twenty years ago I would have placed computer literacy on the enrichment list. Today it belongs on the essential list. Let us begin then to build this essential list, knowing the process will never be completely done.

### **ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE INCLUDES:**

- 1) Literacy: reading, writing, listening, speaking, and logic. The first four are generally recognized as essential but logic is not. If we are ever to teach critical thinking we must teach logic. I do not mean abstract symbolic logic but simple logic that could easily be taught by consistently pointing out and explaining the common fallacies we hear every day in conversation: Categorical confusion, *reducio ad absurdum*, circular reasoning, part whole confusion, nonsequitue, etc.
- 2) Numeracy: basic mathematics including addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, decimals and percents. Fractions should be included only to the extent needed to understand what they are. Performing functions with fractions beyond the simplest is never done. When is the last time you did division of fractions or multiplication of mixed numbers? They still hold prominent places in curriculum of most schools and cause all kinds of unnecessary angst for students, teachers and parents, all to learn things that are useless. Many people presently graduate high school without mastery of basic mathematics. Ironically, if such mastery was acquired before exposure to higher mathematics, it would inevitably result in far more students choosing to take higher levels and being successful at them.
- 3) Computer literacy: word processing, spread sheets, email, Internet, etc. Word processing should be the basic writing program in all schools. Microsoft Word is the standard. This is a learning empowerment tool that works for virtually all students. It empowers students to spell, write clearly, edit easily and to some extent use grammar correctly. Spreadsheets could also fall under mathematics. Once understood, children love to use them. Like calculators, they are learning empowerment tools for mathematics.

4) Study skills: use of learning tools, computers, calculators, the internet, use of references, information sources, libraries, how to access and organize information. Ask any educator how well their students do in study skills and they will readily tell you that most of them are weak. Yet these skills are learning empowerment tools that are necessary for people to have to be able to learn for the rest of their lives. While some of our older successful and happy people may not be computer literate, ALL successful happy people in the future will be, as well as possess all of these skills and tools. Our present system spends insufficient time teaching them and almost no time assessing them for mastery. Students should have continuous access, pre-k to 12+ to all learning tools at all times.

5) Health and Physical Education: We have spent the past decade arguing about a national health care crisis. This should really be called a sick care crisis. The primary responsibility for my health care is mine. Millions of people, who do not know how to do this, have health problems that could be avoided. Yet most schools spend minimal time on this vital area. The "health care crisis" could be dramatically reduced, to say nothing of the pain and suffering that need not happen or the budget busting costs to taxpayers. The old cliché is true; an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Prevention is an educational issue more than a medical one. Ironically, health and physical education are currently considered of very minor significance in current curriculum and receive minimal amounts of time and attention.

6) Basic social studies including history, government and economics: We often hear that students don't know their geography. For example, they don't know where Chad is. They don't need to. They need to know how to find it in the unlikely event they ever need such knowledge. That of course is essential and ALL successful happy people know how to do that. Extensive coursework in social studies is now typical, yet most students do not know the basics in this area. Once again ironically, if the system did an effective job on the basics, many more students would excel in the more advanced social studies.

7) Basic biology, chemistry and physics courses would also fit here. Advanced courses in these subjects would be enrichment and not required of all.

8) Character education: Theodore Roosevelt observed that education in academics, while overlooking morality, creates people who are a menace to society. While character education is making inroads in schools, its progress is slow. Clear understanding of right and wrong and the implications of each are as essential as any knowledge a person can have. Despite this, it is virtually ignored in our present public schools, at least in terms of any systematic effort to teach it.

There is great confusion of values, endless debates over whose values to teach and fear of bringing religion (again, whose religion) into the schools as part of teaching morality.

Notwithstanding all of this, it is generally recognized by educators and others that without addressing this need adequately, the rest of our efforts will have little positive effect on students' lives and futures. Student discipline is currently considered the most serious problem in the vast majority of schools.

Some will say that this is the parents' responsibility. Indeed it is. But if parents don't teach it, all the more reason that the school must. Even those parents who do teach it want it reinforced at school. Presently they find themselves all too often competing with overwhelming peer pressure that is very negative and destructive. This negative force is compounded by much of the media.

For more on my views on this vital topic see "*Character Education: Natural Law, Human Happiness and Success*" by Thomas F. Kelly, Ph. D. This book offers a simple framework for character education that is acceptable in public schools.

Graduation from high school should require student demonstration of mastery of all essential knowledge and skills. Currently only a very small percentage of high school graduates demonstrate such mastery. Sadly, only a very small percentage of college graduates do as well. If they did, we would have a far better educated population than we do.

### **ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE FOR ALL STUDENTS DOES NOT INCLUDE KNOWLEDGE THAT IS DESIRABLE**

Essential knowledge and skills do not include anything that is not possessed by ALL successful happy people. Therefore the following would not be considered essential, though most would be considered desirable enrichment. For individual students, any of these may become essential. While each of these areas of knowledge may become essential for those students who choose careers that require them and/or those who demonstrate high aptitude and interest, they are not necessary for all. Students who master the prerequisite essentials should be free to explore all of these areas and apply themselves extensively if they so choose. Without mastery of the prerequisite essentials, putting students into these courses results in nothing but failure, rejection of these subjects, discipline problems and dropouts. Unfortunately this is standard practice in schools across the country.

Making sure of mastery of essential curriculum will significantly increase the numbers of students who will take and master higher level courses.

1) HIGHER LEVELS OF MATHEMATICS. Since all of these happy and successful people are not mathematicians, we can conclude that higher levels of mathematics, for example, are not necessary for all. Since they are not all literary lights, athletes, etc., we can make the same assumption. There are sets of knowledge and skills that successful people who function in these categories all need, but the general public does not. These will become our enrichment curriculum.

lum and would include algebra, geometry, trigonometry, etc. The overwhelming majority of successful happy people never use these forms of mathematics. When is the last time you:

- Did a quadratic equation?
- Used the Pythagorean Theorem?
- Divided mixed numbers?
- Etc.?

2) HIGHER LEVELS OF SCIENCE. While all students need the basics of science, they do not all need full courses in these areas (biology, chemistry and physics). I remember nothing of chemistry and took typing instead of physics. I am a successful happy person.

3) HIGHER LEVELS OF SOCIAL STUDIES. Citizens of a Democracy need to be able to govern themselves. They need a basic knowledge of American history, how government operates and economics. They do not need to be able to tell where Uzbekistan is or the name of its president. Countless millions of happy and successful people can't.

4) LITERATURE. While millions of us enjoy literature, many more millions of successful happy people have scant awareness of it. It is worse than ironic that schools frequently teach literature to illiterate students lacking the basic language necessary to master it. The first tragic consequence is that they learn to hate literature. God only knows how many Shakespeare haters would love him if they had been taught after they were ready to learn at that level. Certainly advanced literature is not necessary knowledge for all people.

5) ART, MUSIC, ATHLETICS AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION. These areas require special talents for excellence in them. While all students should be exposed to them, none should be required to do them extensively if they do not have the relevant talent. Conversely, those who do have the talent should be given as much access as possible. Presently the schools tend to force students without talent to participate more than appropriate while denying those with talent anything like sufficient opportunities. For those students who want these areas, they may well be essential knowledge. Ironically, the standards movement with its emphasis on academics is squeezing them to ever less time in the school curriculum.

Note: I favor maximum exposure of all students to all areas of knowledge, but only when they are ready and able to appreciate and succeed in them. I do not favor requiring (code word for coercing) them to take these subjects when they are not intellectually ready for the levels of work that they require. The current practice results in millions of students hating mathematics, Shakespeare, and numerous other subjects as well as the teachers and schools that force them to take them when they are not ready.

#### KNOWLEDGE THAT SHOULD BE DELETED FROM CURRICULUM

There was a time when knowing how to shoe a horse was essential knowledge. That time has passed. So it is with

many areas of knowledge. I had an experience while observing a teacher in a middle school in a crime ridden poverty area of an inner city. He was teaching a class of eighth graders and they were completely out of control. It was sad. The teacher was working his heart out at teaching them Beowulf in Old English. If that belongs anywhere it is in a graduate English program and even there as an elective. Meanwhile none of the students were reading anywhere near grade level. Time spent on irrelevant literary material that should have been deleted was not being spent on the essential knowledge of reading. While this may seem like an extreme example, this sort of thing goes on far too often. Failure to prioritize curriculum and delete that which is irrelevant is more the rule than the exception. It is almost never done in the current system.

As the world changes, what may well have been relevant at a time past is no longer. We must realize that time spent on irrelevant material is taken from time spent on essential and enrichment material. It also produces nothing but frustration for students and teachers, failure, discipline problems and dropouts. How many students have tremendous difficulty with things like division of fractions, multiplication of mixed numbers, etc. while this knowledge is useless? Each school should periodically review its curriculum to remove what has become irrelevant. The list of materials to be deleted in most schools is quite long. It should be an ongoing project in all schools.

In general, we should be teaching far fewer things in much greater depth: quality over quantity.

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Dr. Thomas Kelly is Associate Professor of Administration, Leadership and Technology at Dowling College in Oakdale, New York.



# Predictors of Academic Success in First Semester Baccalaureate Nursing Students

by Virginia M. Peterson-Graziose DNP

## Introduction

Disturbingly, 30% of students who enter a baccalaureate nursing education program do not graduate. What is even more alarming, of this 30%, approximately 82.3% leave the program in their first semester (Morgan, 2001). At the same time, the number of students interested in pursuing a baccalaureate nursing education has outpaced the number of positions available for entry into these academic programs. According to The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), U.S. nursing schools turned away 32,617 qualified applicants to entry level baccalaureate nursing programs in 2005 due to insufficient faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, and clinical preceptors (AACN, 2005).

Baccalaureate nursing students who are unsuccessful in their nursing program waste faculty and student time and drain university resources. The high costs associated with students failing out of a nursing program, estimated to be close to \$785,000 per institution, per year, highlight the need to enhance student success and reduce failure rates (Murphy, 2003). Additionally, there are high social costs to individuals and communities when nursing students fail out of their program of study. Student attrition rates directly reduce the number of graduating nurses entering the workforce. An increase in the number of students who are successful in their nursing program would save resources and increase the number of registered nurses entering the workforce. This would have a significant positive impact on the communities where these graduates would ultimately practice. Thus, improving the ability of nursing programs to predict at-risk students early enough to intervene is crucial.

Strategies for fostering student success have included early identification of students most at risk for failure and development and implementation of interventions to support these students (Ehrenfeld, Rotenberg, Sharon & Bergman, 1997; Pimpaiyon, Roff, McAleer, Poonchai & Pemba, 2000; Summers, 2003). Despite these efforts, however, attrition from baccalaureate nursing education programs continues, suggesting that we need to identify more accurate predictors of success. Bean and Metzner (1985) proposed that students drop out because of three sets of interacting variables: poor academic performance, psychological variables such as motivation and stress,

and background variables including age, place of residence, ethnicity, and gender. Therefore, they consider measures of an affective variable (self perception) and a cognitive variable (past academic performance) most likely to predict success.

Numerous studies have found the best predictor of future academic success is previous GPA (Bode & Gates, 2001; Campbell & Dickson, 1996; Grant, 1996; Middlemas, Manning, Gazzillo & Young, 2001). As a result, GPA has become a standard for admission into baccalaureate nursing education programs.

Studies of the relationship between self esteem and academic success have produced conflicting results. In an early study, Woodward and Suddick (1992) examined adult college students over the age of 25 and self esteem, as measured by the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale. Results found a positive correlation between self esteem and grade point average. In other studies Chandler, Lee and Pengilly (1997) and Lockett and Harrell (2003) found a positive correlation between self esteem and academic success. Other studies, however, have not found a positive relationship between self esteem and academic success (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003; Cantrell, 2001; Thomas, 1996).

Self efficacy, a personal judgment or belief concerning one's ability to successfully perform a particular task or behavior (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Betz, 2004; Mavis, 2001) is also hypothesized to influence an individual's likelihood of success. However, studies investigating the relationship of self efficacy to academic success have also reported conflicting results. Harvey and McMurray (1994) and Lane, Lane and Kyprianou (2004) found a positive relationship between self efficacy and academic success, but Hughes and Demo (1989), and Okech and Harrington (2002) found no significant correlation between self efficacy and academic success.

The studies reported differ in age of the participants, time within the undergraduate program when data were collected, instrumentation and ethnicity. Any or all of these factors may have contributed to the inconsistent results in the literature.

The similarity in conflicting research results examining the relationship between self-esteem and academic success and self-efficacy and academic success may be explained by the relationship between self-esteem and self-efficacy. Previous research has found that self-esteem and self-efficacy were positively and significantly related to each other (Blake & Rust, 2002; Chandler, Lee & Pengilly, 1997; Hughes & Demo, 1989; Lane, Jones & Stevens, 2002; Okech & Harrington, 2002).

While there has been concerted efforts by nursing educators to identify factors that predict a student's ability to succeed in a baccalaureate nursing education program, there has been no research on the relationship of cognitive and affective variables to academic success within the first year baccalaureate nursing student population, though this is the period when the greatest number of students drop out.

Therefore, this descriptive, correlational study was designed to examine relationships between students' past academic performance, their self esteem, and self efficacy and their academic success during the first semester of study in a baccalaureate nursing program.

## **Methods**

The investigation was conducted in an urban university in the northeastern United States, with three residential campuses and over 31,000 students. The investigation was done on the most ethnically and culturally diverse campus. There are approximately 350 full-time students enrolled in the baccalaureate nursing program on this campus.

Study subjects were recruited during the first two weeks of class in the baccalaureate program. The study was explained to the students and they were asked if they would be willing to participate. The sample was limited to full-time students in the generic baccalaureate program who gave written consent to participate in the study. A non-probability convenience sample was used, with no limitations of gender, age or ethnic background. The Institutional Review Board of the University approved the research.

## **Instrumentation**

Past academic performance was measured using the student's GPA on admission to the nursing program. Self esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The scale is designed for an adult population and is a self report instrument. It consists of 10 items that are answered on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Total Score ranges from 0 – 30, with 30 indicating the highest score possible (Rosenberg, 1965). The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale has high reliability; test-retest correlations range from 0.82 - 0.88 and Cronbach's alpha for various populations are in the range of 0.77 – 0.88 (Rosenberg, 1965).

Self efficacy was measured using the General Self Efficacy Scale. The original version was developed in German by Jerusalem and Schwarzer (1979). Since that time, the General Self Efficacy Scale has been adapted for 26 other languages. It assesses a general sense of self efficacy for coping with daily annoyances and adapting after experiencing stressful life events. The General Self Efficacy Scale is designed for adults and is a self report instrument. The 10 items are answered on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from not at all true to exactly true, 40 as the highest score possible. The General Self Efficacy Scale has been widely studied and reliability and validity are well established. In samples from 23 nations, Cronbach's alphas ranged from 0.76 – 0.90, with the majority in the high 0.80's (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1979).

Academic success was measured using the student's GPA at the end of their first semester of study in the baccalaureate program. To be considered successful, a student had to achieve a GPA of 2.5 or greater in all of the courses they registered for in their first semester.

Data on demographics, self esteem, and self efficacy were collected from students immediately after informed consent was obtained. The subjects' end of semester grades and previous GPAs were obtained from the Office of the Dean of the School of Nursing, with subjects' explicit permission and in accordance with all Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations. All identifying information was removed from the grade data and coded for data entry and analysis.

## **Results**

An effect size of 0.50 was used for this investigation. Power analysis revealed that approximately 50 subjects were needed for this study, when  $\alpha = 0.05$ , one-tailed, and  $\alpha = 0.10$ , two tailed, effect size = 0.50 (Lipsey, 1990). The sample consisted of 66 subjects, 89.4% of them were female. This is similar to the national profile of nurses in regard to gender; about 92% of registered nurses (AACN, 2005) are female. The demographic profile for the sample differed, however, from the national nursing student profile in ethnicity and average age. While nationally 75% of nursing students are Caucasian (AACN, 2005), this sample was ethnically diverse with 34.8% African-American, 18.2% Asian, 15.2% Hispanic, 13.6 % Caucasian, and 18.2 % listed as other. Additionally, the mean age of the students who participated in this study was 24, while nationally the average age is 21 (AACN, 2005). Age, gender and ethnicity were not significantly correlated with academic success using the Pearson  $r$  correlation coefficient. A total of 72% of the subjects reported high self esteem and 62% reported high self efficacy. However, since data were collected at the very beginning of the nursing program, it is possible that subjects' perceptions of their self esteem and self efficacy were inflated as a result of being accepted into the program. In order to be accepted into the nursing program students must have an admission

GPA of 2.5 or better. Sixty-three percent of the subjects who participated in the study had an admission GPA of 3.0 or better. After completing the first semester in the program only 15% of the subjects maintained this GPA level. Of the 66 subjects who participated in the study 29 were unable to continue in the program full-time, after the first semester, due to their academic performance.

Pearson's  $r$  was used to assess the direction and strength of the relationship between past academic performance and academic success in the first semester of the program. There was a statistically significant, positive correlation between the variables ( $r = .514, p < .01$ ). Conversely, the correlation coefficients indicated that there was no significant relationship between self esteem and academic success ( $r = -.022$ ) or self efficacy and academic success ( $r = -.025$ ). However, self esteem and self efficacy were significantly correlated to each other ( $r = .453, a = .01$ ).

## Discussion

In response to the nursing shortage, enrollments in entry-level baccalaureate schools of nursing are increasing (Rosseter, 2005). However, attrition remains high, especially in the first semester. In this study, over two-fifths (43.9%) of the students could not continue full-time after the first semester. As with other research, in this study past academic performance was significantly correlated with academic success in the first semester. However, self esteem and self efficacy had no significant relationship to academic success. Of the 66 subjects who participated in this investigation, 43.9% were unable to continue in the program full-time due to their academic performance. Given these findings, evaluating admission criteria and counseling students identified as high risk for failure to register part time may be beneficial.

Furthermore, the majority of studies focus on a single variable and the relationship to student attrition. This univariate approach does provide valuable information on specific variables. However, it does not identify which variables may be more important and uniquely contribute to student attrition. A multivariate approach may be necessary to increase understanding the complexity of student attrition rates.

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# Parental Involvement: Structures and Processes

by Korynne Taylor-Dunlop, Ed.D.

## ***No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Parental Involvement***

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) aims at ensuring both academic excellence and equity by providing new opportunities and challenges for states to advance the goal of closing the achievement gap. In an effort to reach this goal, states are required to administer achievement tests in reading and math for students in grades 3-8. NCLB has been praised for its goals of attempting to increase all students' learning, requiring disaggregated data to monitor the progress of major student subgroups and having high quality teachers in every school. In contrast, it has been criticized for placing too much emphasis on the importance of standardized achievement tests, setting unrealistic timelines for obviously unreachable goals, and for not providing the funds needed to meet these objectives. Even though most attention has been paid to NCLB's requirements for annual achievement tests and high-quality teachers, the law also stipulates important requirements for schools, districts, and states to develop programs for parental involvement (Epstein, 2005). The section of NCLB that addresses parental involvement draws on research that specifically studies structures and processes that are needed to develop programs. It is the goal of these programs to involve all families in their children's education (Booth & Dunn, 1996; Epstein, 2001). This is in contrast to earlier legislation that mandated a few parent representatives on school and advisory councils. This left most parents on their own to find ways of becoming involved in their children's education (Borman, Cookson, Sadovnik, & Spade, 1996).

No Child Left Behind clearly spells out four principles that replace the old ways of thinking about parental involvement. These new approaches include more equitable and effective programs that highlight the importance of school, family, and community partnerships (Epstein, 2005). NCLB lists the following principles of increased and effective parental involvement:

1. Parental involvement requires states, districts, and schools to develop and implement multilevel leadership that will create policies and plans to reach all families.

2. NCLB states that parental involvement must be a major element of school and classroom organization and that every school that receives Title One funds must implement a program that meets the needs of the parents (Epstein, 2005).
3. Parental involvement recognizes the shared responsibility of educators and families for children's learning and success in school. This principle emphasizes the importance that students accomplish more and with greater success when the home, school, and community share responsibilities for achievement. Included are Epstein's six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community; to show how to engage families at school and at home (Epstein, 2001; Sanders, Simon, Saunas, Jansorn & VanVoorhis, 2002). Although each model has clear challenges that must be met to turn an ordinary program into an outstanding one, researchers such as Epstein (1981) and Comer (2004), have found that in order to maximize the level of parental involvement, it is necessary to work diligently in the communication dimension (Taylor-Dunlop, et al., 1995).
4. Parental involvement programs must seek ways to include all families, even those who are not currently involved. The law states that communication with parents must be clear, useful, and in language that all parents can understand (Epstein, 2005). Epstein believes that the NCLB requirements for family involvement are attainable by every school.

Epstein's Framework of How Parents Can Become More Involved in Schools includes:

1. Parenting - parenting skills are promoted and supported.
2. Communication - communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.

3. Volunteering - parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
4. Learning at Home - help parents to understand the educational process and their role in supporting student achievement. Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
5. School Decision-Making and Advocacy - parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families. The intent is to give parents voice in decisions that affect their children's education.
6. Collaboration with the Community - community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

Joyce Epstein, Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships (1990).

### ***School Culture and Parental Involvement***

In the constructivist school parents are needed as active participants. The role of the teacher is to recognize the professional competence and expertise of parents and use them in the classroom as participants. In the constructivist school, authority is defined by knowledge and experience. Whoever has the knowledge is in charge of the class, the teacher structures the class so that parents have the opportunity to share their knowledge. The same can be said of parental involvement in their child's mentoring (Hughes & Taylor-Dunlop, 2006).

"Many schools spend considerable energy and resources to encourage parents to be more active in the education of their children" (Sheldon, 2002, p.310). In 1986, Amendments to the Education of the Handicapped Act (Public Law 99-457) states that parent involvement is essential for the success of early intervention programs. Early intervention programs and other programs increasing parental involvement are a form of developing human capital. "Human capital is created by working with people to produce in them skills and capabilities that make them more productive" (Taylor-Dunlop, et al. 2000). There are, according to White, six rationales as to why it is important to involve parents in early intervention programs:

1. Develop parents' sense of responsibility for the welfare of their children.
2. Involved parents are better prepared to advocate for their children for the growth of supportive programs.
3. Programs that involve parents result in greater benefits for the children.
4. Parent involvement results in benefits for the parents and family members.

5. Programs that involve parents may achieve the same outcomes if parents deliver services to their child, which in turn reduces the cost of early intervention services.
6. Involving parents in early intervention programs will reinforce and maintain the benefits for the child (White, et al., 1992).

In recent years, there has been much academic press surrounding the benefits of parent involvement in children's education (Cassanova, 1996; Chavkin, 1993; Epstein, 1995; Henry, 1996). Educational research has examined whether and how parents become involved in their children's education and how schools can increase parental involvement. There is a vast amount of literature that indicates the positive outcomes of parent involvement in affecting children's success in school (White, Taylor, & Moss, 1992; Taylor-Dunlop, et al., 2001; Lopez, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Sheldon, 2002; Pong, 1997; Sui-Chu & Williams, 1996). Some of the parent involvement literature focus on the partnership between families and school (Epstein, 1990; White, 1975). Although all of these are important aspects of the extensive area of parental involvement, one of the most important questions that educators and policy makers consider when looking at student achievement is why parents become involved in various aspects of their children's education. Also brought into question is how parental involvement influences school outcomes. Lareau, (1989), is one of the researchers who looks at the significance of parents' education, income, marital status, and related indicators of family status in efforts to understand parental involvement decisions. Many assert that although these variables are important to the role and functions of parental involvement, they do not adequately explain parents' decisions to become involved in the educational lives of their children. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler state three major reasons for parental involvement:

1. The construction of their personal parental role is formed through observation and modeling of their own parents' involvement in school-related activities and their friends' involvement in their children's schooling.
2. Their personal sense of efficacy is developed by direct experience of success in involvement related activities; verbal persuasion to become involved is worthwhile, share personal skills and knowledge to teach their children. This enables parents to act in relation to their children's schooling.
3. Demands and invitations influence parent involvement (1995).

A study by Sheldon (2002) described two types of parent involvement: (1) parent involvement at home, and (2) parent involvement at school. Parent involvement at home



refers to "parent-child interactions on school related or other learning activities and represents the direct investment of a parent's resources in his/her child's education" (p.302). In Sheldon's view of longitudinal studies on parent involvement with students at home, parent involvement at home provided strong evidence of higher reading and writing achievement test scores and higher report card grades. Parental involvement at school is the interaction between parents and teachers and other school personnel. The parent's involvement in school demonstrates to their children the importance of education. Involvement in school gives parents a better position to support their children's learning.

Pong's (1997) research identified family structure as impacting mathematics and reading achievement. Family structure was identified as single-parent, stepfamilies, and biological two-parent families. Children who live in single-parent and stepfamilies tend to perform poorly on standardized tests. They are less likely to complete high school or continue their education, and may likely exhibit more behavioral problems than children from biological two-parent families. Children from stepfamilies, although they have two parents, are similar to those children of single-parent homes because they live with only one natural parent (Sheldon, 2002).

More specifically, parental involvement varies because parents of different social classes have different values. Parents of lower socioeconomic status seek to place less emphasis on the importance of schooling and maintain a greater separation between their roles and school staff (Sui-Chu & Wilms, 1996). Middle-class parents feel more comfortable relating to teachers and being involved in school activities. Children raised in middle-class families form cultural capital that enables them to adapt more readily to and to benefit from schools. Schools are largely middle-class institutions with middle-class values, organizational patterns, and forms of communication (Sui-Chu, et al., 1996).

Parents' social networks have been viewed as social capital, a source that enhances children's education (Sheldon, 2002). Social capital is created in relationships between people. "Parents who are engaged in continuing conversations with other parents exchange ideas about parenting practices and strategies, thereby enhance their own parenting" (Pong, 1997, p. 745). Parents engaged in parental networks learn how schools work for their children and can counsel them about courses or programs, teachers, peer groups, and extracurricular activities.

School practices facilitate parent involvement to focus on educator-parent relationships. However, it is important to encourage schools to communicate with families and provide individual parents opportunities to help shape school policies (Sheldon, 2002). Regardless of the socioeconomic status of families, single-parent homes, stepfamilies, or biological two-parent families, the key factor to producing students with higher achievement is the parent's social networks. Social networks relationships

among parents, their children, and the schools enable parents to make appropriate choices in school programs and activities for their children (Pong, 1997, p.745). Parent involvement at home, particularly discussing school activities with their children and helping them plan their programs, had the strongest relationship to academic achievement (Sui-Chu, et al., 1996).

Contrary to Pong (1997) and Quiche's (1996) research, a study by Lopez (2001) of an (im)migrant household proves differently. Lopez expands the concept of parent involvement as more than traditional school-related activities that are scripted by schools. He suggests that traditional involvement roles may be outside of the cultural repertoire of some parents. Some parents may have limited exposure to schools, lack economic resources, and may have had prior negative experiences with school organization. "Parents and caretakers who are not involved in the usual ways may not be perceived as being involved in the educational lives of their children" (2001, p.417).

Parental involvement is more than a scripted set of tasks, particularly for immigrant/migrant parents who may perceive the concept of parental involvement very differently from educators. Lopez urges educators to relinquish predetermined involvement typologies that cause culturally diverse parents to be labeled as uninvolved. Parent involvement programs need to expand their definition of involvement to include the parents of children from different social, economic, linguistic, and health-related needs to become involved in schools (2001).

### ***Educational Outcomes and Parental Involvement***

It is important to point out that parent involvement has positive effects on children's educational outcomes. The three key mechanisms influencing these outcomes are: modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction. Parents model their involvement by asking children questions about the school day, talking with teachers, spending time reviewing homework and other activities, valuing school-related activities. Reinforcement is when parents show interest, give attention, praise, and reward their children, acknowledging behaviors fundamental to varied aspects of school success. Parents promote learning and knowledge and promote higher levels of cognitive complexity through direct instruction by asking questions to foster learning. "Parent involvement is a process that occurs over time and is dynamic, and parent, school, child, and societal contributions taken together constitute the involvement process" (Hoover-Dempsey, 1995, p.329).

According to studies by Stone (1950), and Mannino (1962), parent involvement and encouragement toward education at an early age impacts the persistence toward increased education. Ainley, Foreman, and Sheret (1991) identified parental education and parental encouragement strongly influenced their children to remain in school and continue their education. Another study by Goldschmidt and Wang (1999) identified the family's so-

cioeconomic status as an indicator affecting dropout status. The previous studies contradict this belief. The studies by Stone, et al. found that the family's socioeconomic status had little to no significant affect on whether the child remained or dropped out of school. These three studies found the following were ways parents influence their child's success in school:

- Encouragement and expectations to continue their education.
- Majority of parents believed it is helpful to participate in school activities such as PTA or parent functions.
- Acquaintances with families who had children attending college developed an accepting educational pattern in the direction of finishing school.

Of course, there are other factors which influence children deciding to drop out, such as achievement level and perceptions of the quality of their school (Ainley, et al., 1991).

Goldschmidt, et al. (1999), indicates the following factors increase the student's probability to drop out:

- Parents who do not have a high school education
- Single-parent families
- Socioeconomic status (poverty)

This study indicates that community resources and average school and family socioeconomic status are significant factors as well as the individual SES, suggesting the need to develop avenues such as parent centers at the school or special school-home collaborative efforts.

Hoover-Dempsey, et al., recognize that parental involvement is a process that evolves over time. The research also recognizes that the involvement process is a collaborative effort between the parent, child, society, and school. This research also states that collaboration between all stakeholders would contribute to the involvement process.

Conversely, some researchers argue that there is no convincing evidence that proves parental involvement results in more effective outcomes (White, Taylor, & Moss, 1992). One reason that researchers state is the idea that schools often use parents as supplemental interveners instead of involving them in more constructive ways. This suggests that parental involvement is not successful because very little previous research establishes that the intended parent involvement program was well implemented or that parents participated with a high degree of commitment. In addition, the measurement of parent involvement programs have only recently been in place. White, et al. (1992), state that much of the perception that parent involvement is beneficial has been based on anecdotal re-

ports and inadequately constructed research. White, et al., maintain that the educational community anticipates more from parental involvement than is reasonable.

Although some research suggests that the link between parent involvement and student educational outcomes is not straightforward, most individuals still acknowledge it as a means for educational intervention, political representation, and school transformation (White, et al., 1992; Lopez, 2001). The fact that existing laws mandate the involvement of parents in programs for at risk children emphasizes the need to continue to examine what types of parent involvement are most beneficial for children and families (White, et al., 1992). The call for increased parental involvement not only comes from the federal government and local school boards, it also comes from the parents and guardians themselves. Studies show that parents have called for improved opportunities to take part in the educational lives of their children. These requests do not solely exist from majority populations, but also from marginalized groups that have progressively organized for parental voice and participation in schools (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Hatch, 1998). People, voices, perspective, identities, and phenomena that have been left out or "excluded" from the center of dominant society are often described as marginalized (Hudak, 1993). Studies suggest that these marginalized parents express deep concern in being involved in their children's education, which puts great demands on schools to meet the complex needs of diverse families (Chavkin, 1993; Chavkin & Williams, 1989a, b; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990).

For some parents this involvement in the educational lives of their children may seem unconventional to the mainstream. Parents and caretakers who are not involved in the usual ways may not be perceived as being involved (Lopez, 2001). For many, parental involvement traditionally reflects activities and practices such as bake sales, fundraisers, PTA/PTO, and "back-to-school" nights. For some, parental involvement includes volunteering in school, participating on school based program planning teams, and/or attending school activities. Still others, reviewing homework, and attending parent/teacher conferences can be considered parental involvement.

In order to be involved in these socially sanctioned ways, parents and other family members must have prior knowledge of these established involvement "scripts." Research consistently suggests that marginalized parents are not "involved" at the same rate as many white, middle class parents (Chavkin, 1992; Moles, 1993; Comer, 1986). Scholars suggest that additional involvement roles may be outside the cultural repertoire of some parents, especially marginalized parents who have limited exposure to school, lack of socioeconomic resources, and/or negative experiences with school organizations (Auerbach, 1989; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Valdes, 1996). Although many of their activities are outside traditional ideas of involvement, researchers state these parents and family are involved, to a large extent, in the lives of their children (Lopez, 2001).

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

Individuals, especially growing adolescents, are highly impacted by their families and other close relationships. The literature suggests that parent involvement programs should be more sensitive to an expanded and diverse population (Lopez, 2001). This is particularly critical in schools that service large diverse populations for whom social, economic, linguistic, and health related needs make it especially difficult for parents to become involved in traditionally sanctioned ways (Lopez, 2001). Research continues to document that when schools organize high-quality programs to inform and engage all families, many more parents feel welcomed at the school, valued by educators, and become involved because of parent, school, and classroom partnership practices (Epstein, 2001; Sheldon, in press; Simon, 2004; VanVoorhis, 2003). Backed by research findings, it is suggested that parent involvement is related to increased student productivity. Many schools have taken aggressive steps to dismantle the multiple barriers that inhibit full collaboration between the home and the school (Becher, 1986; Coleman, 1992; Comer, 1986; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Epstein, 1986, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1995, 2005; Henderson, 1987; Henderson, Marburger & Ooms, 1986; Weisz, 1990). Schools need to establish new ways to effectively promote success for all students. They will no longer be able to rely on a one-size fits all approach to parent involvement.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) state that parental involvement has a positive effect on the educational success of their children. Regarding parental involvement, they state, "its absence eliminates opportunity for the enhancement of children's education; its presence creates those opportunities." (p.310). Children perceive their parents as powerful and respected and when parents exhibit positive attitudes toward school-based activities, children model this behavior (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995). Children form strong bonds with adults, imitate their actions, attitudes, and values (Taylor-Dunlop, et al., 2000). The behaviors of parents demonstrate to children that activities related to their education are worthy of the adult's interest and time. Parental modeling is an enabling variable with respect to children's positive educational outcomes. Its presence enhances the possibilities that children will do well in school. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler state that parents influence their children's educational outcomes by reinforcing specific aspects of school-related learning. It is maintained that parental reinforcement of behaviors linked to school success enables and enhances positive educational outcomes. Academic achievement is a function of the school, parent, and students operating synchronistically and synergistically (Adams & Singh, 1998).

In order to meet many of the academic and social needs of students who never had parental involvement and for those whose parental involvement has begun to wane, mentoring is one way that provides these students with the support they desperately need (Hughes & Taylor-Dunlop, 2006).

In conclusion, parental involvement impacts students' success in school. Parents want the best for their children. Parents that express their expectations and encourage their children and develop social networks with families who share the value of education will impact their child's level of achievement in school and develop an increased expectation to continue their education.

School is a vehicle for social change and redistribution of resources. School leaders must recognize that parents and community members have much to contribute. Without reinterpretation of the role of parents, the participants will remain convinced that success is not possible. School leaders must work with parents, staff, and community to develop engagement between student, teacher, and curriculum. Leaders must work to change the culture to one that stresses academic and extracurricular success, constancy in values, structure, intergenerational closure, and linkages of adults to children. This is a collaborative effort.

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# Give Them What They Want!

## Administrative Guidelines for Staff Development Based on Secondary-Teachers' Learning Styles

By Diane B. Scricca

On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed into law the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation designed to have a major impact on educational assessments, curriculum, funding, policies, and virtually every aspect of school-decision making across the United States. As a result of NCLB, state education departments have been mandated to: develop grade-level standards, assessments, district and school report cards, improve teacher qualifications, establish timelines for meeting NCLB mandates, and create consequences for districts that do not close the achievement gap according to their state's guidelines. Regardless of the political motivation that might have spurred this important legislation, few critics deny the impact this law has had on our profession during these past five years.

### ***No Teacher Should Be Left Behind!***

Despite the controversies that surround NCLB, many educators have become focused on and immersed in reducing the academic achievement gap for all children. Now, regardless of their disability, race, or migrant or socioeconomic status, all students are expected to attain proficiency in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies (NCLB, 2002). However, this legislation failed to address the problem of teachers not being *left behind* while ensuring proficiency for all their students. Clearly, raising the bar for student achievement requires that all professional educators attain a higher level of instructional understanding than they currently possess, a knowledge of experimental educational research, and the ability to understand what contributes to the implementation of effective pedagogy (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollack, 2001). Wright, Horn, and Sanders (1997) stipulated that teachers are essential in this quest. Indeed, these authors perceived that teachers affect student achievement more than any other single variable. Their findings emphasized the importance of viable, sustained, and worthwhile professional development programs delivered through conference days, in-service workshops, and other district-designed initiatives.

### ***Teacher Dissatisfaction with Staff Development***

Many teachers generally are dissatisfied with district-generated professional development opportunities. Typi-

cally, administrators, consultants, or staff developers design professional growth opportunities without teacher participation and within the limitations of the school day and the teachers' contract. These professional experiences rarely focus on teachers' needs in terms of instructional strategies effective for improving the academic achievement of the many academically challenged students assigned to their classes. Furthermore, a three o'clock lecture after a full day of teaching—the norm for staff development, seldom acknowledges the weariness that many teachers experience at the end of an active instructional day.

Although previous researchers focused on dynamic professional development, little of their attention was devoted to in-service designed with consideration of the participating teachers' learning styles. Dunn and Dunn (1993, 1999) found that most people can learn when they are taught in style-responsive environments with resources and approaches that complement their unique strengths. Logically, attention to teachers' learning-style strengths while designing staff activities should result in more proficient and worthwhile professional development experiences. In addition to the teaching of effective instructional approaches, recognition of teachers' individual learning styles should improve their attitudes toward their professional development experiences.

### ***Learning Styles and Secondary-School Teachers***

As educators plan for staff development, it is essential that they create teacher learning opportunities that are grounded in best research and practice. Knowledge about how adults learn should provide the basis for planning and implementing any professional development opportunities. Attention to teachers' learning styles, as being significant elements that impact staff-development effectiveness, has been found to be crucial by several researchers (Raupers, 2000-2001; Taylor, Dunn, Dunn, Klavas, & Montgomery, 1999-2000). In each of these studies, it was recognized that, for professional development to be a valuable tool for instructional change, staff developers need to identify the learning-style preferences of the participants and create workshops responsive to individual participants' learning-styles.



## Study Participants

The population for this study consisted of 75 secondary-school faculty from one racially mixed Nassau County, New York, public high school serving approximately 1,700 students in grades 9 through 12. Participants were diverse in age, race, subject certification, and teaching experience.

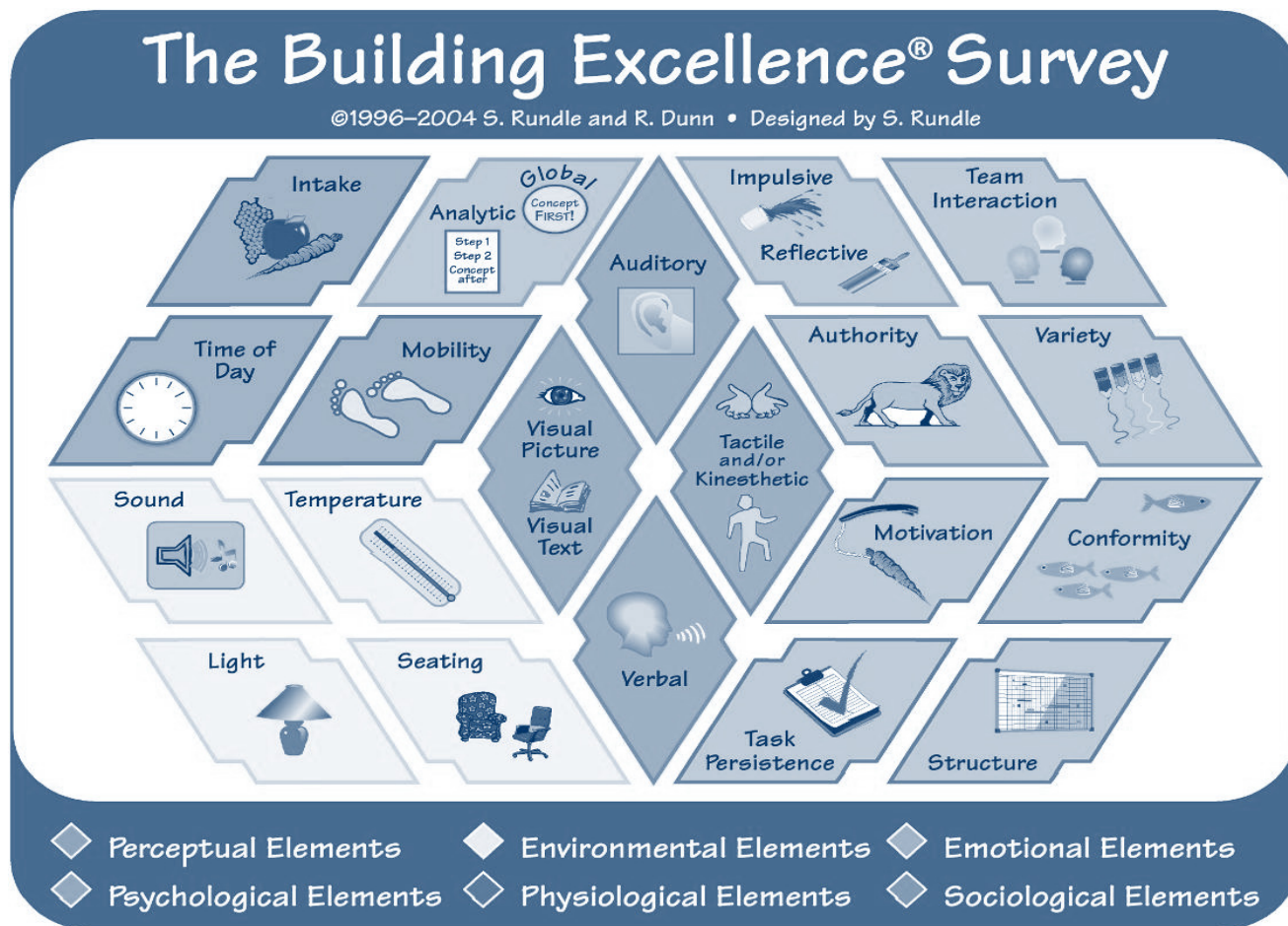
## Determining Teachers' Learning Styles

This study examined the impact of learning styles on teachers' attitudes toward staff development. I administered *Building Excellence* (BE) (Rundle & Dunn, 1996, 2000) (see Figure 1), a reliable and valid adult assessment, to identify each participant's learning-style profile. The computer generated a 12-17-page individual profile explaining each teacher's Emotional, Environmental, Perceptual, Physiological, Psychological, and Sociological strengths. The Profile also described how each should engage in any new or difficult academic task. After analyzing individual profiles, a group report was examined to determine the common learning-style elements for the entire group.

## Creating Staff Development Based on Teachers' Learning-Style Preferences

Lesson plans for these staff-development workshops were crafted to provide an introduction to learning style as well as two small-group instructional techniques—Team Learning and Circle of Knowledge (Dunn & Dunn, 1999). To address the perceptual profiles of the participants, one combined auditory/verbal/kinesthetic and one other tactual/kinesthetic lessons, which were designed to provide the same content but delivered through two different instructional methods. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two groups. Thus, each workshop included teachers whose perceptual strengths either were consonant or dissonant from the strategies used to teach them the two small-group techniques.

At the end of each workshop, the *Semantic Differential Scale* (SDS) (Pizzo, 1981) was administered to determine individuals' attitudes toward the staff development they experienced. The category *verbal/kinesthetic* is a relatively new classification intended to describe persons who



**Figure 1. The Dunn and Dunn Learning-Style Model as Represented in the Building Excellence Adult Identification Assessment ([www.learningstyles.net](http://www.learningstyles.net))**

inevitably tend to talk (either to themselves or to others) while listening to a speaker or lecturer.

### ***And the Results Are?***

Unquestionably, the teachers who had been placed in a workshop that complemented their learning-style strengths—the consonant-treatment group, had statistically more positive attitudes toward it than the teachers in a workshop that was dissonant from how they learned. An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) compared the total mean scores on the SDS for the auditory and tactual/kinesthetic modality groups by consonant versus dissonant treatments. This resulted in the examination of four distinct groups—A/VK consonant, A/VK dissonant, T/K consonant, and T/K dissonant. There was no effect for modality strength or treatment group, but the post hoc LSD testing revealed an interaction effect demonstrating that teaching modality was significantly related to the participants' learning-style preferences. In 1987, Buell and Buell reported essentially similar findings with their sample of participating teachers and nurses. Participants, who were either A/VK or T/K preferenced, when in consonant treatments, had more positive attitudes toward the provided workshops than those in the dissonant treatment groups. Furthermore, the consonant group revealed more positive scores on the SDS than the dissonant group ( $p < .001$ ). The total mean score on the SDS was significantly higher for the consonant group as compared with the dissonant group despite the treatment modality.

To further explore this interaction, a series of simple main-effect tests were performed to identify the specific interaction effects (see **Table 1**). There was a significant difference in attitudes between the A/VK and T/K preferenced participants in an A/VK treatment ( $p < .01$ ) as well as between the A/VK and T/K preferenced participants in the T/K treatment ( $p \leq .05$ )—indicating that regardless of preference, when participants were in a consonant treatment, their attitudes were significantly more positive.

### ***Suggested Administrative Guidelines for Staff Development***

Prior to administering the treatments to these professional educators, BE was administered to all the participants to determine their learning-style preferences. The participants expressed interest in and curiosity about this assessment. At the end of the study, we distributed the BE outcomes and many of the participants engaged me in lengthy conversations concerning their personal BE results and their feelings about the workshops. Based on these discussions and the statistical results of this study, the following administrative guidelines for designing staff development should be considered seriously:

1. Staff developers should identify the learning styles of the educators who will be participating in their professional workshops. Clearly, this study's participants' learning-style profiles demonstrated a variety of preferences. Even those educators, who had been teaching for more than 10 years, were unaware of the impact the accommodation of learning-style strengths had on their own attitudes, achievement, and working conditions. Therefore, the learning-style assessment group and individual profiles should be utilized as a basis of discussion—not only when designing staff development, but also when creating teachers' schedules and when implementing new initiatives. The more administrators know about how their faculties learn and strive to accommodate their preferences, the more likely training can be optimized and the working experiences of people under their aegis can be improved.
2. If teachers are expected to address the learning styles of their students, they need to understand their personal styles and how to maximize their own instructional environments and opportunities. As teachers recognize the differences within and among themselves, they will be better able to accommodate such preferences for their students. When teachers develop learn-

***Table 1. Post Hoc LSD Testing for Interaction Effects***

Teaching Modality	Modality Strength	Modality Strength	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>a</sup>	95% Confidence Lower Bound	Upper Bound
A/VK	A/VK	T/K	.65(*)	.21	.003	.24	1.07
	T/K	A/VK	-.65(*)	.21	.003	-1.07	-.24
T/K	A/VK	T/K	-.42(*)	.21	.05	-.84	-.005
	TK	A/VK	.42(*)	.21	.05	.005	.84

ing strategies that make it easier for them to master intricate or comprehensive knowledge, they gradually will recognize the impact of learning-style strengths on their pupils' attitudes and performances.

3. When designing professional workshops, staff developers should try to deliver material responsive to their audience's learning-style preferences. Workshops are frequently scheduled for the end of a teaching day and delivered in a lecture format. Researchers do not subscribe to this unilateral mode of instructional delivery for school-age students. However, lecture and dissonant time-of-day choices frequently are found in professional development for educators. BE profiles offer staff developers a wealth of learning-style information that can be utilized to tailor workshops to complement how the participants learn. This, in turn, should increase the positive attitudes, level of implementation, and achievement of the workshop participants.

4. Secondary-teachers tend to lecture rather than deliver instruction that meets the learning-style preferences of their students. When teachers are exposed to instruction that reflects diversity in perceptual modalities, they will be more likely to consider this learning-style element when creating lessons. Therefore, the application of even a single learning-styles element in staff development is likely to significantly impact teachers' attitudes as demonstrated in this study.

Schools have become increasingly accountable for their students' achievement, and, simultaneously, have focused attention on professional development for educators. If we are to expect our teachers to vary their instructional strategies to meet their students' needs, so too must staff developers diversify their approaches to meet the learning requirements of teachers. Through the implementation of a learning-style responsive environment, coupled with research-based, pedagogical content, staff development can become an exciting, productive experience for our teachers.

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# Out of the Mouths of Babes: Students "Voice" Their Opinions on Cyber-Bullying

by Margaret Jackson,  
Wanda Cassidy,  
and Karen Brown

## ABSTRACT

The intent of this study was to gather information and gain a broader understanding of cyber-bullying among youth. This article reports on a series of responses to one open-ended question posed at the end of a 14-page survey consisting of 192 variables administered to 365 students in grades six, seven, eight, and nine from three elementary and two secondary schools in a large metropolitan region of British Columbia, Canada. In this open-ended question, students were asked whether they had anything else they would like to say about cyber-bullying. Over one-quarter of our sample population responded to this question, giving examples from their personal experiences, offering opinions on cyber-bullying, providing suggestions for school intervention, and providing possible solutions. This paper highlights their responses, using their voices to communicate information that is useful to educators, researchers and parents, providing perspectives from students themselves to the growing problem of cyber-bullying.

## INTRODUCTION

(MSN exchange between two grade 7 girls in our study)

- A. *oh im sexy gorgous n full of curves yeya!! What are you again? A giraffe, moose, camel and a carrot. That's exactly what you look like and hunni, look at my dp that's me and I aint ugly*
- B. *oh what happened to, every form of a body is beautiful? Or does that only count when something is said to you?*
- A. *i make exceptions about yourz*
- B. *i have a good body, better then you can ever dream of, ur a short,fat,bitch with nothing to offer, so what makes you think i would ever want to be like you? i would rather die then ever look like you, or be your friend*
- A. *hah im short? Haha I whant your body? Dud your waist is long it like never ends, neither does your face or neck its all bones you can clear tell you starve yourself . . .*

- B. *you'll never be thin but instead of dealing with it, you just make other people who are thin feel bad*
- A. *the only person I intentionally whant to offend is you. Because your nothing but a long gnarley ugly bitch. Dude your nose looks like a mountain with a dog taking a sh\_\_ on it...*
- B. *....why do you even where a top and bra to school. We all know how your dieing to show off your boobs*

Our technological world has created an abyss for potentially harmful interactions between youth through a variety of electronic media. The topic of cyber-bullying has created a fervor among educators and social scientists in the last few years as many young people are bullying off school grounds, using electronic communications and exclusions to vent their anger (Brown, Jackson and Cassidy, 2006; Thomas, 2007). Although a full literature review on the dynamics of cyber-bullying has been published elsewhere (Brown, Jackson and Cassidy, 2006), it is useful to understand the constantly mutating electronic environment from the perspective of those members of the so-called digital generation. For example, Thomas (2007) relays a story about "Violetta" who decided on a whim to portray herself as a boy online as an experiment in chat rooms, describing herself as "a tall, rugged and [having] a well-toned, muscular rippled body" (p. 48). Unfortunately, the experiment went terribly wrong when one of the girls in the chat room developed a serious "crush" on her "male" avatar, which ended in Violetta being forced to reveal her deception. As Violetta describes the story, the smitten girl went "totally berserk, screaming at me and telling all my other 'new' friends that I was a phoney" (p. 49). In the end, Violetta was ostracized from the chat room by her "new" friends who felt she had been disloyal and dishonest.

Another example is "Percirion," a boy who apparently offended a girl in a chat room, who then responded by "tagging" him, so whenever he was online, no matter what log-in name he used, a message would appear under his



log-in name. This carried on for over a year, after which time “Percirion” retaliated by shouting “FOR OVER A YEAR NOW I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO APOLOGISE AND YOU KEEP BUTTING ME AWAY! WHAT’S WRONG WITH YOU!” (Thomas, 2007: 52). Cyber-bullying can also end tragically, as in the case of “Alex”, a thirteen-year-old boy who took his own life after merciless teasing by a group of girls who text-messaged him constantly about his weight and girth (Anderson & Sturm, 2007). Stover (2006) describes the various methods of cyber-bullying:

*“John receives a text message on his cell phone warning him to ‘watch his back’ while he is at school tomorrow. Jane discovers that classmates have created a ‘Hate Jane’ website where people are able to post derogatory comments about her. Someone steals Mary’s computer password and e-mails a break-up letter to her boyfriend – signed, of course, in the name of Mary herself” (p. 1).*

In many cases, adults are misinformed or lack the knowledge to fully understand the intricacies of these technological advances, so gathering information on such behaviours as inappropriate email communications, contentious website creations and postings, chat room misbehaviours and inappropriate text messaging, is crucial to instigating effective barriers and modifications to curtail cyber-bullying behaviour and creating a kinder, more caring cyber-world (Brown, Jackson and Cassidy, 2006). Consonant with that intent, we undertook a survey of 365 students in elementary and secondary schools in a large metropolitan region of British Columbia, Canada.

This paper’s objective is to discuss participants’ responses to an open-ended question posed at the end of our 14 page survey: *“Is there anything else you would like to tell us about cyber-bullying?”* A full page was allocated for students to respond to this question, allowing them the opportunity to write in their own words rather than responding to multiple-choice and check-list options offered in the closed-ended portion of the survey. Students were given a voice (Barron, 2000; Cook-Sather, 2002) in this project so we could learn from their perspectives. Further, as Barron (2000) and Palys (2003) note, allowing respondents to express their points of view adds an important dimension to research, making it more comprehensive. It is sometimes the case, particularly when it comes to the Internet or technology, that there is a fissure in knowledge between adults and young people which may affect the way a research project is conceptualized or interpreted (Brown, Jackson and Cassidy, 2006). Although useful data can come from young people answering *pro-forma* survey questions, setting out open-ended questions where students can voice their opinions in their own language can help contextualize data and provide further insight into cyber-bullying actions (Barron, 2000). As a result, analysis of these two types of data can enrich a research project and provide more encompassing results (Palys, 2003).

In the case of the final open-ended question in our survey, students’ responses varied from informative and insightful to flippant and sometimes obnoxious. Some students told poignant stories of things that happened to them or their friends when online, thus illustrating the forms of cyber-bullying students were experiencing and the effect these behaviours had on the victims and their friends. 25 percent of our sample population wrote something in response to this question; they seemed to want to share their experiences, opinions and suggestions. This open-ended portion of our study proved to be a valuable source of data (Palys, 2003), providing a richer understanding of the problems and effects of cyber-bullying.

## METHODS

This study of cyber-bullying among youth involved preparing and administering a survey to 365 students in grades six, seven, eight and nine from three elementary and two secondary schools in a large metropolitan region of British Columbia, Canada. At the outset, we sought approval from the appropriate school boards, and once obtained, we chose five schools which represented some diversity according to ethnicity and socio-economic status. Before we administered the survey, we visited each participating classroom to discuss with students the cyber-bullying research project, answer any questions they may have, and to distribute the parental/guardian consents forms. Approximately one week later, we returned to the schools and administered the surveys to those students who had returned the consent forms. One researcher was in the room while the respondents completed the survey to answer any questions, interpret certain terms and language if necessary, and monitor the students’ behaviour to ensure responsible reporting.

The survey instrument consisted of 192 variables, using closed-ended dichotomous and categorical-response questions, with a few open-ended questions embedded throughout the survey, including the final question, which asked for “anything else they would like to tell us about cyber-bullying.” Cyber-bullying was defined for students at the start of the survey as “using the Internet, cell phones, text messages and other technologies to send cruel, untrue or harmful messages about someone that hurts them. Hurtful messages can be sent from a home computer or from the school.”

The survey was designed to be user-friendly and language-appropriate, with an appropriate font, layout and spacing for easy reading and completion. The vocabulary was age-appropriate and allowance was made for students whose first language was not English, to ask questions of the researcher during the survey completion. In the survey we canvassed, for example, demographic information, asked about computer and cellular phone usage, sought data on the types and number of cyber-bullying incidents, both from victim’s and perpetrator’s perspectives, delved into online behaviours, and requested their positions on solutions to cyber-bullying. Spaced throughout the survey were a series of six open-ended questions asking respondents to clarify or elaborate on responses to closed-ended questions; for

example, to provide examples of cyber-bullying, to tell us which students were most likely to be bullied online, and to suggest solutions. The results of the quantitative analyses, including these clarifying responses are reported elsewhere (Cassidy, Jackson & Brown, in press).

In addition to the student survey, we also conducted interviews with five principals, one vice-principal, nine teachers and two community school coordinators. Their participation was voluntary and once consents were received, each person was interviewed for approximately 30 - 40 minutes. Questions ranged from their experiences with cyber-bullying, to how the incidents were addressed, to possible solutions and policy and practice implications. The findings from these interviews are reported elsewhere (see Authors, 2008).

Although discussion of all survey variables is beyond the scope of this paper, we wish to give readers a sense of the demographics and technology use among our sample population in order to contextualize our findings. Participants ranged in age from 11 to 16 years, with 40.8 percent male and 59.2 percent female. The majority of our sample population was of Asian descent (69%), which included Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Taiwanese, Japanese, Thai, and Filipino. Twenty-one percent of respondents were Caucasian, 3 percent East-Indian, Indo-Canadian and Pakistani, 2.5 percent South American and 1.6 percent Middle Eastern. Although most of our students are Asian in this study, these percentages fairly accurately reflect the cultural diversity of the school districts in which we conducted our research.

We asked respondents if they use the Internet at home and if so, how often. Among the 363 survey participants (two missing) who answered this question, 355 students report that they use the Internet at home with 64 percent claiming they access the Internet at least once a day. Twenty-three percent use it three to five times per week and seven percent sporadically surf the Internet once or twice per week. It is interesting to note the similarities in Internet usage between genders: 66 percent of the boys use the Internet daily compared with 64 percent of the girls; 22 percent of boys compared with 24 percent of girls use the Internet three to five times per week, and the same percentage (7%) of boys as girls use it once or twice per week. A little more than half of the respondents (58%) have their own cellular phones. Of those students who have cellular phones, approximately 40 percent use their cellular phones at school, and approximately 38 percent use them to send text messages.

#### **METHOD OF ANALYSIS FOR FINAL QUESTION**

A thematic approach was adopted to review the participants' responses to the final open-ended question asking for "anything else they wanted to tell us about cyber-bullying," in order to first determine the major themes (or topics) they chose to talk about, and second, to examine any sub-themes that surfaced within each major theme. In conducting this analysis, we looked at the frequency of re-

sponses (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and used a process of review and re-review using a backward and forward motion to identify predominant themes (and sub-themes) as well as appropriate coding descriptors (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). After careful analysis, four major themes emerged. These themes are categorized and labeled as: students' opinions on cyber-bullying; examples of cyber-bullying; solutions to cyber-bullying, and opinions on school interventions. Interestingly, these were the topics that we had sought answers to within the body of the survey, in our closed-ended questions. It appears that 25.5 percent of the students (less 2.5% who flippantly or obnoxiously answered this question) wanted to detail further information on these topics in their own "voices," notwithstanding they had just completed answering a 14-page survey. The thrust of their initiative was not lost on the researchers – the importance of "listening" to student opinions offers a unique and invaluable perspective into their digital world. Finkelhor, Mitchell & Wolak (2000) suggest that youth should be involved in policy-making decisions and be included in providing ideas and solutions to cyber-space dilemmas. They suggest that "youth should be included in advocacy and educational campaigns about standard and healthy Internet behavior...and [youth] should be viewed as resources for crafting intervention messages..."(p. 1315).

Once these themes were identified, we examined each theme further to uncover sub-themes or messages that were dominant within each theme.<sup>1</sup> Participants are coded in this article by gender and age (e.g. M12).

#### ***1. Students' opinions on cyber-bullying***

Overall, 72 students (out of 93 who answered this question) relayed their opinions about cyber-bullying and technology use. Many students expressed their concerns about the serious consequences of cyber-bullying - problems such as absenteeism from school and feeling scared, depressed or suicidal. For example, F14 reports that "*Cyber-bullying is a huge problem in our society. Nobody should be bullied in this world. Or else many people can end up depressed and they can eventually commit suicide. This situation is important to deal with. It is completely wrong.*" M12 divulges that, "*Most messages are sent from MSN or email. The student will then feel scared and might even not go to school.*" Further, twelve students worry about how hurtful cyber-bullying can be, for example, as M13 expresses, "*Bully should just stop doing this because people could end up moving out of the country because they feel hurt because they been bully and it didn't stop probably the bully just kept on bullying NON STOP!!!!*" Another M13 reports that "*many children are bullied are afraid to report since they have been hurt and are scared.*" Others answered in the same vein – F11 advises that "*more and more children are hurt by cyberbullying and I don't know how to stop it,*" or F12 reveals that "*even though people think words online aren't as hurtful as in person it really is. Being called a name because of*

<sup>1</sup> In conveying these findings, the students' own words, grammar and spelling are used, so that their own voices come forth.



*weight or anything else can really hurt a person's feelings".* The importance of delving into cyber-bullying problems was unfurled by F11 who thinks that *"people should be more serious about cyber-bullying because it is important. A student can be really hurt by it."* In fact, in the quantitative portion of our survey, 11.5 percent of the respondents ( $n=364$ ) reported receiving hurtful messages even when they asked the sender to stop. As F12 explains *"words hurt, but you can't stop them either."* In their study of 1,501 youth aged 10 to 17, Finkelhor, Mitchell & Wolak (2000) concluded that one-third of youth harassed online reported feeling very upset and stressed. Willard (2006) confirms that cyber-bullying, and certainly the power of the written word, can produce monumental damage to youth, considering the popularity of digital use and the amount of time youth spend online. The consequences of such cyber-technology abuses can produce long-lasting results ranging from low self-esteem, anxiety, anger, depression, school absenteeism, poor grades, an increased tendency to violate against others, and perhaps to the extreme - youth suicide (Willard, 2006).

Notable are some of the differences in gender responses. Whereas girls reacted to cyber-bullying with more of an empathetic stance (*"cyber-bullying would be easier to stop if we were more kind and empathetic"*) (F13), boys in this group responded with more audacity. Some opinions include, *"cyberbullying is what I call 'chicken bullying'"* (M15); *"it is only venting. Learn to love yourself and all is well"* (M14); *"you can't stop cyber bullying. It's part of life just like bullying"* (M14); *"gay and lesbian jokes are now just for fun and many students don't care"* (M12); *"other people just bully because they think it's cool and if they bully people they'll become popular"* (M11); *"sometimes kids do it because they think it's cool or think it's a big joke. They're probably not even trying to hurt anyone, just to be cool"* (M13) and *"cyber bullying is not important - kids don't get bullied. They only get 'made fun of' because they probably deserved it because they're cocky or annoying. You wouldn't bully someone that hasn't done anything"* (M14).

Our analysis indicates that when respondents were asked if they had personally participated in harassing or bullying another student online, 21.5 percent of boys as opposed to 29.5 percent of girls report engaging in such activities. This leads to the dilemma of whether boys in this study actually cyber-bully less, or whether they, on the other hand, "mislabel" cyber-bullying (it is only "venting" or "being cool") or externalize the blame as a form of rationalization (e.g., *"They only get 'made fun of' because they probably deserved it because they're cocky or annoying. You wouldn't bully someone that hasn't done anything"*) (M14) (Gibbs, 1991). Again, many girls in this study may not report cyber-bullying practices because they perceive themselves as victims while blaming the other (Willard, 2003). F14 confirms this hypothesis when she explains that, *"cyber-bullying is not all the people who did it's fault. If that person is not annoying, keeps her mouth shut, mind her own business, then no one would even want to bully her. It's partly her fault that this happened anyways...we have no choice but to at least find somewhere to express our anger towards her*

*that's why it's not entirely our fault."* In this case, F14, who engaged in cyber-bullying exchanges with another girl, may not identify as a cyber-bully but as a victim in these circumstances, thereby answering the closed-ended question about being a victim instead of a cyber-bully.

Another important issue which was substantiated in our quantitative analysis is the possibility of revenge bullying (see Cassidy, Jackson and Brown, in press). Students who are victims of face-to face traditional bullying or cyber-bullying may find retaliation via electronic media swifter and conducive to anonymity where victims (soon-to-become cyber-bullies) can masquerade on the Internet without identity detection. In fact, ten percent of the respondents in our study reported engaging in cyber-bully behaviours because they were bullied first ( $n=361$ ). F12 reveals that *"if other people call you names... it can also turn you into a bully because you'll have to fight back,"* or as F12 illustrates, *"Expressing their own anger online is also easier to do than expressing themselves face-to-face with the person they are upset with."* Further, F13 claims that *"some people are just sensitive. Everyone is mean nowadays you can't do anything about it. If you get insulted, insult the person back!"*

Lastly, Cassidy, Jackson and Brown (in press) report that the most common reason given for not trusting school personnel is fear of retribution from the cyber-bully. The data revealed that 47 percent of participants who are (or could be) victims of cyber-bullying would not confide such victimization to school personnel ( $n=325$ ), with the most common reason being fear of retribution from the cyber-bully (30%). This runs contrary to existing cyber-bullying literature that claims youth are most reluctant to inform adults of cyber-bullying problems for fear of having their technology restricted or parents finding out about it and "grounding" their access to cyberspace (Cassidy, Jackson and Brown, in press). These quantitative claims are substantiated by two responses in this open-ended question that claim *"cyber-bullying is very harmful and if the victim reports the bully, then the bully will try and take revenge. That is why some students don't tell anyone when they are cyber-bullied"* (F12). Further, F13 clarifies,

*"Cyber bullying is because some people hear rumors from other people and bully them. Once they realize what they have done they feel sorry, but not some enough to stop. And if they have enough friends to fight back they do but if they don't they'll just take it all in and try to ignore it. The reason why no one tells anymore, if they have been a victim or have seen cyber bullying is because if the bully was ever to find out they would be in more trouble and anyone who tried to be friends with them would be bullied to!"*

Students are reluctant to report victimization because their identity would be revealed and consequently labeled a "rat," which could result in further abuse. However, students offered solutions to this dilemma which is discussed later in this article.

## 2. Examples of cyber-bullying

Although students were given the opportunity to provide examples of a time they felt bullied online or through text messaging in another open-ended question embedded in the middle of our survey, nineteen students offered to expand and emphasize the seriousness of cyber-bullying in this final open-ended question. Most of the students who share their personal cyber-bullying plights in this particular section are girls. One girl, for example, has never been bullied before “in her entire life” until a girl who did not like her began to cyber-bully. As she explains,

*“Now I don’t wanna come to school at all. Half of my friends think she is cool so we aren’t really friends anymore. Because of this one person my life is really bad. I feel bad about myself. People that have never been bullied are like ‘they are nerds, its not so bad’ but what do they know. Words hurt, but you can’t stop them either. The friends that are on my side, are true friends. Now I know who I really should think of as friends. Bul-lies would never change, they were born mean and will die mean.” (F12)*

Another student conveys a story about contentious websites, which are becoming common forums amongst youth to mock and denigrate (Brown, Jackson and Cassidy, 2006). The creation of websites meant to harm or belittle individuals can be devastating (Brown, Jackson and Cassidy, 2006). F12 explains,

*“There are certain bullies who would give up their free time and create websites about the person they bullied. The websites include so much hurtful things, internet groups are added, they are suppose to be the website owner’s hobbies, I experienced a person who created a website about me and added sexual related groups as hobbies and posted so many pictures of me that she changed so the physical appearances are hideous. She posted so much! Numerous writings of my personality that isn’t true, it’s really hurtful. I think the websites that gives you a chance to create another FREE website should be shut down.”*

Another girl tells of a boy who had started bullying her,

*“It just started by him saying that there was a grammatical mistake in this chain letter. Then it started getting worse, but I told my dad, but he still kept doing it. I was very annoyed, but at least he stopped. I sort of regret our little feud, but the guy was extremely mean to me. Even though I should have told a teacher, I didn’t and I regret that”. (F11)*

Two students believe that cyber-bullying extends from boredom, for example, as two (F14) explain that “I think people who cyber-bully are people who are bored to their minds. They have nothing better to do then just criticize someone hiding behind a computer,” and “kids now do it because they’re bored. They have nothing else to do but to

pick on innocent and vulnerable students.” To test the possibility that a lack of extra-curricular activities can lead to increased student freedom and possible anomalous/delinquent behaviours, we included a closed-ended question in our survey to determine the respondents’ involvement in school and extra-curricular activities. In this question, we asked our participants in which extra-curricular activities do they participate. Our analysis indicates that 51 percent of respondents play on sports teams (soccer, basketball, field hockey, ice hockey, volleyball); 44 percent take music lessons or play in a band; 19 percent are involved in church/temple/mosque and other religious groups; 17 percent volunteer with neighbourhood organizations; and 6.8 percent are involved in drama clubs or theatre groups. Our analysis indicates that of those students involved in extra-curricular activities, 23 percent report engaging in cyber-bullying, while 29 percent of those youth not involved in extramural sports report cyber-bullying practices.

Further, Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) conducted one of the largest studies on the characteristics of youth engaging in online harassment behaviours. They administered their survey between September 1999 and February 2000 and telephone canvassed 1,501 male and female youth between the ages of ten and seventeen, along with one caregiver in each household. They posit that cyber-bullies show indications of academic under-achievements which may lead to early school dropout, and that long term online engagement may lead to elevated Internet abuse. In this study, of the 64 percent of respondents who report using the Internet at least once a day ( $n=361$ ), 32.5 percent admit online bullying as opposed to 16 percent of users who are online 3-5 times per week. Therefore, the connection between online use and abuse is established.

## 3. Possible Solutions to Cyber-bullying

Although participants in our survey were specifically asked what they believe are the three best solutions to stop or prevent cyber-bullying (see Options in Appendix I), 25 participants expanded on this issue in the final question. In the survey, our sample population chose the following three solutions as best remedies to cyber-bullying (in order of preference):

1. setting up anonymous phone-in lines;
2. developing programs to teach students about cyber-bullying and its effects;
3. Work on creating positive self-esteem in students (Cassidy, Jackson and Brown, in press)

Many students support programs, Internet blocking mechanisms, and anonymous phone hotlines as tools to prohibit cyber-bullying practices. For example, F12 reports that “I think the idea of anonymous phone hot-lines is a really good idea because that way, kids can speak freely without worrying that someone will know their identify.” She further adds that:

*“maybe you could have an email account that is for people who got cyberbullied. Of course, I think that*

*would be a great idea if you guys would reply back so the victims would know that there are people who care for victims like them. Having a chat room for people who got bullied online would be great too. Victims could express to other victims and share their thoughts."*

Educators and counselors can consider these suggestions to remedy students' concerns about anonymity. Students also substantiated their preference for specific solutions, establishing a formula for policy intervention. For example, F12 thinks the "school should have a small program every month or every few months to teach us about cyber-bullying, so it's like a reminder to us how cyber bullying can hurt people." M13 feels there should be "an easy way to report and actions should be taken immediately [and] the child should be comforted by therapy."

Other students firmly believe that fostering a positive attitude and working on self-esteem issues amongst youth may prevent or hinder cyber-bullying. M11 explains that:

*"What we can do to help is restrict it and have students to have a positive attitude to themselves and to others and it is not going to work until everyone's happy. Anyone under the social bar has high chances of getting cyber bullied so kids have to be better friends. If you do something wrong and interesting you will get teased same as cyber bullying, it is just another way to bully someone of all the ways. To stop cyber bullying you have to stop all bullying."*

F12 also agrees and concludes that "pre-teens and teens who are the biggest victims of bullying, need to get into programs and groups to start feeling better about themselves. And until we work together to boost everyone's self esteem, insecurities and ego, cyber-bullying will be a problem."

In conclusion, allowing youth to help enforce proper conduct among their peers is an important step. Possible youth-oriented campaigns can be initiated in the school to demonstrate and emphasize the dynamics of cyber-bullying. No matter what initiatives schools undertake in dealing with cyber-bullying causes and effects, involving youth in the policy-making processes would accentuate the credence of acceptable cyberspace behaviours in society. However, there were a few students who expressed reluctance to allow adults and school officials to intervene.

#### **4. Should the school intervene?**

Discussions on school intervention differ among the 15 students who discussed this remedy. Many feel it is beneficial to inform teachers or principals, while others object to the school being involved at all. Our quantitative analysis determined that almost one-half (47%) of respondents who are victims of cyber-bullying would report it to school officials (Cassidy, Jackson and Brown, in press). Accordingly, as described above, F12 believes that the school could not accomplish much on the issue of cyber-bullying but did suggest that a small school program could be offered every

few months to teach students about cyber-bullying, as a reminder on how hurtful cyber-bullying can be. F12 claims that schools should focus on social responsibility:

*"It doesn't happen at our school very often. Maybe at other schools they could focus on social responsibility and teach kids how to treat others nicely. It's good to learn about being a good person early."*

M14 thinks that open communication helps in schools, so if students are being cyber-bullied, they should inform the teachers, or as F14 reveals, in her elementary school, one student "turned herself in" after the school discovered her contentious website and threatened police intervention. Nonetheless, M12 does concede that it is a universal problem, and adults and youth should pair their resources by suggesting that "every child and adult should participate in helping destroy cyber bullying. Nobody should be hurt online. Everyone should help." F12 qualifies the school's involvement by claiming "the only time when the school should help is if the student tells the school counselor or principal and if the bullying continues at school." Lastly, F15 pleads that "no one is taking action. All you do is talk about how to stop it, your not doing anything – these surveys help, so do more."

Conversely, seven of the respondents consider adults to be interfering in their milieu and resent any involvement in what they call "our world." Many feel they cannot trust adults with problems they consider exclusive to their generation. As we determined in our literature review (Brown, Jackson and Cassidy, 2006), there are discrepancies in what adults think children and adolescents are doing online, rather than what actually is occurring in this environment, and knowledge gaps create a breach in trust that overshadows possible solutions created by adults. For example, two F13's lament that (1) "Adults can't really solve it – I wish they could" and (2) "It's a special thing. Adults can only support and not do or make great changes even if they try." Many participants believe that cyber-bullying is a generational problem that adults simply cannot solve, as F12 explains, "Adults should look through our point of view instead of making up their own solutions for OUR problems!" F14 agrees, "Adults simply do not understand." Lastly, F12 expresses her opinion more vehemently, "why on earth does the fucking school have to deal with this bullshit."

#### **CONCLUSION**

We believe that it is important to listen to youth. Too often, as researchers, we neglect to listen, to understand what youth, especially the digital generation, are trying to tell us. Students were given a voice in this project so we could learn from their perspectives of what they believe are the causes, consequences and possible solutions to cyber-bullying. Although some of the suggestions made on our survey are somewhat impracticable, other comments will assist us in formulating possible solutions and policies at the school, home and pedagogical levels. Since cyber-bullying usually takes place either in the school or home

environment, it is practical to train educators, as well as parents, on ways to create a positive environment and foster both individual and community spirit, endorse camaraderie, promote empathetic skills training and create solutions when problems arise. It is also important for schools and parents to define the dynamics of cyber-bullying so mislabeling and blaming the other does not cloud youth judgments and actions when online. Relying on students' voices, we can begin thinking of creating more anonymous phone hotlines (perhaps at the school level), school programs, anonymous email accounts (at the school level or within parent/volunteer groups) and chat rooms for youth as a support vehicle for victims. Incorporating students' own solutions into an adult plan may answer some of the lingering questions researchers have with regard to cyber-bullying. What is paramount are the long-lasting effects youths may harbour as a result of being cyber-bullied - self-esteem issues, negative attitudes, self-misconceptions, and personality disorders.

It is also imperative to teach youth, especially males as evidenced in this survey, the differences between mocking and hurtful behaviour. Empathetic skills training and other training programs should be introduced in the school curriculum so youth will begin to understand and relate to how it feels to be recipients of unkind words. Often these types of insights into possible bullying behaviours are underdeveloped in the young, so what might be considered scornful behaviour to adults is interpreted as fun and playful to youth. It is vital that young people acknowledge the difference.

We felt it only fitting that we should close with this comment from F12:

*"Cyberbullying allows some people to understand the world wrongly. They would think of freedom in the negative way and eventually join gangs, illegal societies, and be included in acts of violence. They would live and not know why they're living, nor understand how priceless life is. They wouldn't appreciate others nor ever consider others feelings. It is upsetting to know that people on Earth are turning into pointless programmers. So because of this, cyberbullying and normal bullying must be controlled and solved at the best depth. This will make the world a much better place to be."*

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# THE RELATIONSHIP OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS TO LITERACY ACQUISITION IN PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

By Phyllis Sterne

As educators begin to focus more on the relationship of early childhood education to literacy development, it is becoming apparent that quality programs in the preschool and kindergarten years enable children to make gains in emergent literacy performance. Parents, by their parent/child reading practices and involvement in and with school activities, have the potential to play a significant role in their children's literacy acquisition.

A review of literature reveals the importance of establishing a home-school connection and of involving parents in their children's education whether *in school* or *at home*. DeCusati & Johnson (2004), in their study of parents as classroom volunteers and the impact on kindergarten students' emergent reading skills, found that children benefited from having parent volunteers in the classroom as evidenced by increased word recognition skills in the children who were in the treatment group. Their study was teacher action research, set up in an experimental design. Important in their findings was the fact that *all* children in the classroom benefited from having parent volunteers present because as the adult/child ratio improved in the class more individual attention and small-group activity occurred. Additionally, parents benefited from being in the classroom in that they learned more about what goes on in the classroom and about the process of education. This parental development allowed them to work more effectively within the classroom setting and with their own children as they reviewed skills and concepts at home. Furthermore, opportunities for parent and teacher collaboration were enhanced by volunteer presence in the classroom.

Teachers can plan the implementation of an ongoing volunteer program that would allow for flexibility of hours and provide opportunities for involvement across the curriculum areas. While DeCusati and Johnson focused on parent involvement within the school setting as a means of impacting literacy development, Elias, Hay, Home, & Freiberg (2006) studied parent involvement at home. Their goal was to en-

hance preschool children's language and emergent literacy development while increasing parental involvement in their children's education. The study took place in a disadvantaged community in Australia and English was not the primary language for 54% of the families in the study. In years prior to the study, teachers had expressed concern about parents' apparent reluctance to become involved in their children's education. A goal was to create socially and culturally relevant reading materials for the participants so that students and their parents would want to engage in shared reading experiences and so that parents would learn to believe that they could contribute to their children's education in meaningful ways. As a result, individual picture books were created for each child based on the child's own experiences. These were used to implement a parent-child dialogic reading program. They were the basis for reading and language activities at home (such as pointing to words, talking about the story, asking questions) and were integrated into the school setting as well. At the end of the six-month study, the amount of time spent in parent-child reading had doubled, and children were motivated to spend more time in literacy-related activities at home and at school when the individualized picture books were used. Further, the non-English speaking parents showed higher levels of confidence when using the specially designed books to read with their children. In fact, one outcome was that parents who were engaged in this program not only spent more time reading with their children at home, they also tended to visit the school more and engaged in parent-child reading there. This study shows that parent involvement positively impacts student literacy development.

Interestingly, while Foster and Miller's study (2007) focused on the development of the literacy achievement gap and not literacy development *per se*, their findings complement the findings of the two studies discussed previously. That is, students coming from families who were better able to support literacy development were more likely to enter kindergarten with a higher level of literacy readiness skills

and thus would be better prepared to achieve literacy success through third grade. Foster and Miller discovered that socioeconomic status was the factor that most impacted this literacy readiness. Families with poverty or chronic low income, and with lower levels of parent education, were least able to provide support for literacy development.

These three studies thus support the premise that parental involvement and early childhood education programs are essential to the literacy acquisition of young children. Yan and Lin (2004) bring to light the importance of other key variables, such as class size and length of the school day. Their study showed a positive impact of small class size and a full-length kindergarten day on academic achievement, particularly for poor minority children, which in part concurs with the findings of Foster and Miller. Clearly, further research needs to be done in this regard, but the value of parental involvement is already abundantly apparent. If we are ethically bound to provide the highest quality education possible to all students, then we are morally bound to find ways to reach out to their parents, helping them learn how to help their children learn, and giving them the resources and confidence to do so.

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# ***The State of Music Education on Long Island, New York: Interviews with Four Music Directors***

By Korynne Taylor-Dunlop, Ed.D.

## ***Introduction***

Music scholar-practitioners focus generally on the talents and training of future musicians. In this time of financial distress we need to understand the business of K-12 music education more than ever before.

## ***Background***

*School Band and Orchestra* (September, 2008) conducted a survey nationwide on how the economy is affecting school band and orchestra programs, as reported by the school music directors. They found:

1. Will your program feel the impact of the recent downturn in the economy this coming school year?
  - 78% reported yes and 22% reported no.
2. How does this year's budget compare to last year's?
  - 8% reported we have no money to spend
  - 49% reported it's about the same
  - 43% reported we have less money to spend.
3. Which areas of your budget are most likely to be affected?
  - 32% reported purchasing musical instruments
  - 14% reported repairs
  - 3% reported uniforms
  - 24% reported funds for travel and competition
  - 22% reported purchasing new music
  - 5% reported other.
4. Will your capacity to travel for competitions and festivals be jeopardized?
  - 25% reported Yes
  - 38% reported No
  - 38% reported I'm not sure.

Last October *The New York Post* reported that: "just 8 percent of city elementary schools met state requirements for arts instruction in the 2007-08 school year, according to a new report." This figure represented a doubling from the previous year when "only 4 percent of schools offered dance, music, theater and visual-arts classes to students, as required."

New York City's middle schools had more substantial gains - 46 percent of the schools met state instruction mandates, resulting in a 17 percent gain from 2006-07.

While Mayor Bloomberg states: "this year we saw more schools offer more art to more children, and we're going to keep building on that progress." But, says the Post, advocates for arts instruction in schools said they were disappointed by the city's poor standing on state standards, and they voiced particular concern about how arts spending would be affected by the city's economic downturn (NY Post, Oct. 16, 2008).

Dean Jerrold Ross of St. John's University outlined three key points about these music issues:

"First is the overemphasis on standardized tests in reading and math to the exclusion of almost every other discipline - the primary criterion by which principals and schools are being 'graded.' Second, is the budgetary cutback in the City's schools which will inevitably emerge in the already limited funds for the arts despite the Chancellor's mandate that the arts not be affected. Third, and perhaps the most compelling problem, is that we now have in place three generations of teachers and school administrators who, themselves, have had little if any exposure to the arts in the school curricular through which they passed. It is obvious that the school team is striking out" (Ross, 2008).

## ***Qualitative Methodology***

I recently asked four music professionals: Dr. Debra Kalabza-Balsamo, Music Director at Smithtown Public Schools, Dr. Anthony Ambrogio, Administration for the Arts and Human Resources at Manhasset Public Schools, Diana Cook, Director of Music and Fine Arts at Middle Country School District and Izzet Mergen, Director of Music Education in Northport to respond to the following questions regarding music education on Long Island:

1. What are the three to five most important issues today regarding music education on Long Island?
2. From five years ago to today how has music education instruction changed?
3. How do you maintain a good program?



4. What is the nature of music instruction today?
5. How have electronics and technology helped/hurt every facet of music programs?
6. Are students coming to music education programs?
7. What are you dropping?
8. What do you miss that you used to have? Are things better or worse?

### Findings

#### 1. What are the three to five most important issues today regarding music education on Long Island?

Some of the responses to question one regarding the three to five most important issues included:

- a. Parent advocacy for music programs.
- b. Administrative (non music administrator) awareness of programmatic/educational differences pertaining to music education.
- c. Music director advocacy at the state level.
- d. 2009 budgets will probably bring program cuts to music departments across the Island.
- e. Music assessments are an important topic in New York State Council of Administrators of Music Education (NYSCAME, Ratner, 2008).
- f. Finding rehearsal and lesson time with all of the requirements from the state for testing, and added services for more students.
- g. Academic Intervention Services.
- h. Funding for programs, trips, instruments, artists.
- i. Keeping teachers educated to keep up with the special services and technology needed to teach all types of students.
- j. Finding qualified teachers, attracting them to the program, and keeping them from burning out with the challenges that are faced in terms of scheduling, funding, space issues, student services, growing class sizes, and less support from parents regarding their children.

Dr. Ambrogio concurs with Dean Ross: "In my view, the most important issue facing music education is the continuing trend toward standardized testing. With America's need to catch up with the rest of the world in technology, science, math, etc., the government and society have pushed these items to the forefront of education. The federal and state governments have called for more and more testing, with higher and higher scores. The pressure on teachers at all levels to 'teach to the test' has taken creativity out of the regular classroom. In order to answer the call to NCLB, the arts have often been relegated to the margins of the educational realm. It is a struggle to maintain a focus on the arts as a vital part of the core curriculum."

#### 2. From five years ago to today, how has music education changed?

Students' skills are becoming stronger, faster. At the same time, students over-extending themselves and not having enough time to commit to music are concerns. Many students, especially those in so called high performing schools, feel the need to take part in everything from fencing to debate teams to mathletes to music, art, and academics. Ambrogio observes that students rarely have the opportunity to pick one activity about which to become passionate.

Their goals as music educators have not changed over time and include: to collectively work with parents, teachers, administrators, scholars, students, legislators, community members, and boards of education to move the programs forward and help all students learn better each and every day, one student at a time. Fortunately, as students of music, self-reflection and self-assessment are qualities built into the way music teachers are "wired", says Dr. Kalabza-Balsamo.

According to Dr. Kalabza-Balsamo, in some instances, it seems that programs have been cut and positions absorbed since last year. Some newly hired part time music teachers found it very difficult to find a job. Smithtown was one of the few districts hiring music teachers this past summer. Smithtown made severe cuts to the program two years ago and realized that they cut too deeply. Central office administration report that music and art may be a target in the 2009-2010 budget. The reason is the very small mandate requirement and the financial demands on the district. "There is no place else to cut" says Dr. Kalabza-Balsamo.

One director said that five years ago there was a director of fine arts running the music and art departments. During this time the money allocation for music and supplies was greatly reduced. Staffing was cut throughout the department.

At the middle school level the teacher-student ratio was doubled and the rotation classes went to every other week (2006-2008) giving students two instrumental lessons per month instead of four. In addition, the elective program was eliminated causing all students to be enrolled in a music performance group - band, chorus or orchestra. Discipline problems were an issue. The high school teachers were absorbing the program's growth while reducing the number of students allowed to enroll in Music Theory I.

In another district the elementary received a cut in student contact time with the teacher teaching six classes instead of five. Fourth grade chorus was offered to all students in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. This cut gave very little savings to the district. Instruments were not purchased for several years. A bid was made that included repairs to all rental instruments. The vendors rented this district instruments in need of repair, knowing the district was responsible for fixing them and returning them in good working condition. This cost the district thousands of dollars over a six year period. In this instance the director of fine arts was eliminated, the superintendent was removed and the department was left in disarray.

Today, in this district, there is a change for the better. Central office administration is aware that severe cuts to the music department would be detrimental to its survival. Central office has spent the last year working with key members of the music department with a determination to get this district back on track. Many new instruments have been purchased and the supply budget has been increased. A group of teachers, with titles and stipends, have been designed to pick up portions of the position that was eliminated. Instruments in need of repair must go back to the vendor. As a result all new instruments have been rented, therefore a decrease in repair costs is expected. The middle school in this district now has a seven day rotation which allows a student to receive three instrumental classes per month. The elective program with general music included is slowing coming back. New music teachers were hired for 2008-2009. "If the economy allows, this district will see more monies coming to their program. If not, it will be devastating," says Kalabza-Balsamo.

In a different district some programs are still growing but other parts are not. And all programs are in danger because of the financial struggles Long Islanders are having. This district was able to start a string program ten years ago, but lost kindergarten music and in that time also moved the string program to start in fourth grade rather than third.

### 3. *How do you maintain a good music program?*

Ambrogio believes that a program that is going to enjoy widespread support must have a solid foundation. A strong elementary program is essential to the success of the middle school: the middle school program, with the teachers' understanding of the middle school students' unique needs (such as the changing male voice), is essential to the success of the high school program. "The high school program not only provides commencement level experiences for its participants, but also serves to inspire and motivate the younger students. Neither is without the other. I also believe strongly in the artist-teacher model, and our teachers are encouraged to practice their craft."

In one district six of the music teachers are working very closely with the assistant superintendent, and "the teaching staff is wonderful. We have a group of people who are committed to music education and kids."

Cook believes "prioritizing" was the word that summed up how to maintain a good music program: "Hiring the best teachers and getting them what they need to do the job. Advocating for the program, lobbying, keeping the students learning, visible, and excited about music."

In summary, stated the music directors, a good music program is maintained by many factors. Some include:

a. Maintaining regular communication with the staff, students, parents, building administrators, and even local newspapers. A Director of Music Education, preK-12 helps to facilitate this.

b. Providing professional development opportunities for teachers that support the instructional needs of students. "For example, this year we are going to be offering workshops for music teachers to better instruct special learners."

c. Encouraging certain members of the staff to pursue administrative certification. "This is crucial in terms of continuing important programs and reforms we have put in place."

d. Working together with colleagues in the county and state (other Directors of Music Education) to move all programs forward in positive ways on a regular basis. This can take place in several ways including staff and/or administrative visits, to see unique components of music programs or specific instructional delivery strategies. This allows leaders in music education to network, to learn from one another and to support one another. The goal of all of the music directors is that all music programs on Long Island are strong.

### 4. *What is the nature of instruction these days?*

The instruction has changed very little, says one director. Technology is being added to this program very slowly. The teacher's goals, commitment and expectations are still the same. "We are working on more communication within the department. Teachers do not have an opportunity to get together and talk about the program. This is a goal for 2008-2009. The last five years gave us a reduction in supplies and poor instruments. Teachers spent time repairing instruments rather than working with the students. We should see a change for the better this year."

Mergen believes instruction continues to evolve each year. Over the past five years Northport has instituted an elementary pre-school program for special learners, developed a percussion curriculum which involves a comprehensive music component, and a four-year conservatory composition/theory sequence at the high school. They are also offering Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate level courses.

Mergen goes on to say that if you visit any school concert on Long Island you will hear some terrific things. Students are performing some wonderful repertoire at extremely challenging difficulty levels. "The level of music performed on our Island by school bands, orchestras, and choirs is astonishing. Students' skill at decoding music, with coaching from our wonderful music teachers, is maximized. These students appear to understand, to comprehend, all that they are decoding."

### *True Musical Literacy*

True musical literacy, a topic of interest to Mergen, much like literacy in another language, involves the ability to think, speak, read and write in a language. Speaking in another language and writing in another language are tangential to the musical skills of improvisation and composition. All students need to improvise and compose so that they can understand what they need. "Music programs

across Long Island need to continue to foster this literacy from pre-K on."

Other directors believe instruction is more intense, and more aligned with the New York State standards. It is more curriculum based. Greater technology helps students learn more, faster, and through many more avenues - both individually and in groups through more research-based methods and diversified learning, including multiple intelligences. It is also evaluated more at a state level by certified adjudicators. And, finally, many more students are involved in the assessment process.

##### 5. Has technology helped or hurt your program?

All directors interviewed agreed that technology has been a benefit and has made instruction more intense. For example, software is used to aid students with composition, ear training, and assessment. Students in the Northport middle school are emailing their instrumental homework performances as MP3 files to their teachers for a grade. In this district there are dedicated computer music composition labs at both of the middle schools and at the high school.

While in a different district, there is a minimal use of technology due to money allocation. This has been an ongoing problem for the past twelve years.

Dr. Ambrogio summed up the electronics/technology discussion: "Those programs (music theory, rhythm, and ear training), along with electronic composition are worthy components of an overall program, but they are not substitutes for real-life music-making, in which a student performs in real-time as part of a group."

##### 6. Are students coming to music education programs?

"We have no problem with students being attracted to the program. In Smithtown, the students are still signing up for the music program in record numbers. It is not a hard sell," says Kalabza-Balsamo.

This year there were 1200 Smithtown students participating in the NYSSMA solo festival. "The Smithtown community encourages their children to participate in music and has always been known for its music program," says Kalabza-Balsamo.

Dr. Ambrogio stated: "yes, our enrollment has grown dramatically over the past three years and the growth looks like it will continue for the next several years as our enrollment continues to grow district wide."

The answer at Middle Country was yes, with a qualification. Cook stated: "but more students each year need help renting instruments."

Mergen agrees that they are coming and cites two major contributors to this. Northport's Tri-M Chapter of the National Music Honor Society has developed an elementary tutoring program. They also believe that a large contributor to the success of student involvement is their elementary-high school level summer music programs. The table below illustrates the population participating in this elementary/middle level summer music program for the past five years.

During the past summer, this district's music department operated eleven separate programs with a total of 1,859 participants. The summer music program in Northport is comprised of:

- a. Exploratory Instrumental Program
- b. Marching Band Pre-Clinic Rehearsals
- c. Elementary/Middle School Band
- d. Flagline Pre-Clinic Rehearsals
- e. Elementary/Middle School Chorus
- f. Tigerettes (Kickline) Pre-Clinic Rehearsals
- g. Elementary/Middle School Orchestra
- h. High School Choral Clinic
- i. Continuing Instrumental Lessons
- j. High School Tiger Marching Band Clinic ("band camp")
- k. High School Chorus Pre-Clinic Rehearsals

During this year's clinic, 302 Tiger Marching Band members participated in daily rehearsals held in the morning, late afternoon, and a number of evenings. The Marching Band could not continue performing at the highest level without the essential work done during the annual Summer Music Clinic. The Summer Music Clinic gives students an opportunity to continue developing their skills and knowledge in a more concentrated manner than is usually possible throughout the school year. "The Summer Music Clinic", says the Music Director, "is a wonderful opportunity to welcome our incoming ninth grade students into the high school program."

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Exploratory Instrumental	457	457	393	421	439
Elementary Band (Grades 5 & 6)	50	52	114	60	95
Intermediate Band (Grades 7 & 8)	25	29	29	40	36
Elementary Orchestra (Grades 4 & 5)	56	54	76	50	42
Intermediate Orchestra (Grades 6, 7, & 8)	15	18	18	25	26
Continuing Instrumental Lessons	294	231	284	310	371
Elementary Chorus	35	42	49	20	25
Intermediate Chorus	15	21	19	30	19
<b>TOTAL SUMMER PROGRAM</b>	<b>947</b>	<b>904</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>956</b>	<b>1053</b>

## 7. What are you dropping?

In one district, at the high school level the number of Music Theory I classes have been reduced and the class size cap increased. This has resulted in a small enrollment for Advanced Placement Music Theory II. This year they were given the okay to offer the classes at both high schools with a warning for next year if enrollment does not go up. They have discussed the need for two Music Theory I classes due to student interest and requests, which will give them the enrollment needed to offer AP Music Theory II at both high schools in the district. "Our plea will be made in January, 2009. Again, it all depends on the economy." The student load per teacher district wide was also increased.

At the middle school this district reduced weekly rotation classes from every week to every other week (2006-2008) and now to two rotation classes every three weeks (2008-2009). The elective program, which included general music (2006-2008), was cut. This year they have started to add this program back into the curriculum.

At the elementary level the 4<sup>th</sup> grade chorus was cut, classroom music became once per week for 40 minutes, and teacher load was increased to six classes per day.

Administratively, the director of fine arts position was eliminated and replaced with three instructional specialists, (2007-2008), two lead teachers, three instructional specialists and an assistant principal to oversee the program (2008-2009). This district has a music facilitator K-12, two lead teachers, three instructional specialists, and an assistant principal overseeing the program K-12.

Ambrogio states that last year his district decided to discontinue their middle school general music program as it was being offered to a pool of less than thirty children. The students can now select from band, orchestra, chorus, art and drama classes. This decision was made in order to accommodate the growth of their performing music program. A greater number of children are more interested in performing opportunities than in classroom activities, he concludes.

Northport, says Mergen, has not dropped any components of their music program. In fact, they are looking to build even more. For example, their high school Tri-M Chapter of the National Music Honor Society is developing a chamber music concert series that will be student run and organized, and will promote life-long learning. This is in addition to "the other things they are working on, including a free music tutoring program for elementary school students. They are also looking to develop more elementary level programs such as keyboard study."

Middle Country has lost teaching positions, extra-curricular/co-curricular positions and some equipment funds, says Cook.

## 8. What do you miss that you had five years ago? Is it better or worse?

Kalabza-Balsamo says she does not miss anything from five years ago since at that time, the Smithtown music program was going through hard times. "What I miss," she states, "is what we had in 2001":

1. Excellent repair vendors
2. Excellent rental vendors
3. New instruments on a regular basis
4. 80-100 students was a full time instrumental position. Now we are at approximately 200 students.
5. A strong leader within the department
6. Respect throughout the community
7. An adequate music budget
8. Communication among elementary, middle school and high school
9. Programmatic flow

Dr. Ambrogio misses the third grade string program which was discontinued due to budget restrictions about five years ago. Mergen and his colleagues miss the staff that have retired. And on a positive note, he says, "the new folks are also wonderful." Cook misses the kindergarten music that was cut due to two positions being eliminated, less time with more to teach, and the ability to buy things with a lot less red tape. She says some things are better and some are not.

## Implications for Education

In light of all we now know regarding brain-based learning, learning styles, and multiple intelligences, music and the arts are critical to the learning process, not an afterthought.

## Music for Special Learners

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 1 in 3007 students were diagnosed with autism in 1990. In 2007, 1 in 150 students were diagnosed with autism ([www.edc.gov2008](http://www.edc.gov2008)). Students with learning disabilities, in addition to the above mentioned, are mainstreamed more commonly today into special area subjects like music, art, and physical education. Consequently, music for special learners is another important direction in music education. Mergen states, "we need to focus more department meetings, collegial circle hours, and professional development opportunities to continue to support instruction."

## Impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on School Music Programs

According to a 2006 survey of music administrators in New York State, conducted by the Council of Administrators in Music Education (NYSCAME), there seems to be some impact from NCLB on music education programs in New York (Ratner, 2008). Students are pulled out of special area subjects (art and physical education) to receive academic intervention services (AIS) in some less privileged and rural communities.

All four of these music educators believe music education is alive and well on Long Island. All agreed that Long Island music programs continue to be vibrant and relevant. Dr. Ambrogio reports “our program has been consistent in participation rates and quality over the past three years.” According to Dr. Kalabza, music educators are constantly monitoring this situation.

Based on the School Band and Orchestra (2008) survey regarding economics, some of the changes or adjustments music directors across the country will be making, include doing repairs on their own, and talking with music boosters about increased assistance. Others stated that funds initially earmarked for travel will be used for instruments and music. One respondent stated: “I will have to beg, borrow and steal if I have to.” Another suggestion nationwide was to limit what was done with the program or ask students to contribute money to the music program.

When asked for creative ideas to help band budgets weather this economic crisis some of the responses throughout the United States included:

- a. Fundraising should have two-year goals in mind. One director stated: “small schools and lower grades should consider band parent organizations—not just high school programs.”
- b. Repair and replacement needs to be done on a cyclical fashion so that everything does not go bad at the same time.
- c. Ask for donations at concerts.
- d. It is crucial to be an advocate for music education.
- e. Don’t complain about lack of funds because it may adversely affect people’s attitudes towards music.
- f. Since a music director did not have money to begin with, she was not concerned with her situation in that it would likely remain the same.
- g. “We educators know that musical participation keeps kids in school, helps develop the brain, gives kids a sense of belonging to a group, and teaches them self discipline” (Kuehner, South Bend, Ind.).

Mergen states, “over the past 50 years, music teachers and administrators have built some wonderful programs. We cannot take these programs for granted. We have all-county ensembles, all-state and national music festivals, New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) Solo and Major Organization Festivals, and a

myriad of other terrific programs. These programs would not be in existence without the dreaming, hard work, and persistence of music teachers, supportive school boards and directors of music education. We, on Long Island, are standing on the shoulders of giants. We need to maintain their legacy and continue to dream and make our programs even better.”

A philosopher once said: “a generous heart, kind speech, and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity.” My thanks to all of the dedicated professionals who participated in this study and have devoted their careers to bringing music education to students.

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# Substitute Teachers: A Return to the Search for Meaningful Instruction in the Teacher's Absence

by John A. Nidds, Ed. D.

*The author of this article initiated a similar study and subsequent article in 1994. Since 14 years have passed since then, I decided to ask the same questions again to a new cohort of secondary principals, and tabulate their suggestions. The following, then, represents 40 secondary school principals' input on the search for meaningful instruction in the absence of the classroom teacher.*

Ask secondary school principals to list their daily annoyances by degree of irritation, and, inevitably, near the top of each column, you will observe responses alluding to teacher absenteeism or teacher substitutes. Ask the same question of deans or department chairs and the absentee teacher/substitute teacher/student misbehavior matrix will be at the head of their lists also, bold-faced, underlined, and starred.

The dilemma is universal. The frustration is deep. Yet, a search of educational journals reveals little that addresses the problem. There are few positive suggestions, let alone sure-fire remedies for all the difficulties - especially the loss of valuable instructional time - that emanate from teacher absenteeism. Equally important, the beleaguered substitute teachers, in some cases neophytes preparing for careers in education, are routinely subjected to exhausting and demoralizing experiences.

The situation was first brought to my attention by graduate and undergraduate education students who had begun their practice teaching, and by graduate students who were initially certified and matriculating for masters' degrees (at Dowling College) in order to obtain professional certificates in secondary education. Many of these latter students substitute at Nassau and Suffolk County public schools as frequently as possible in order to acquire experience, tuition money, and an inside track to a job opening.

The districts where these Dowling students substitute range from wealthy, academically superior ones to underfunded districts coping with high percentages of chil-

dren living in poverty, many of whom speak little English. The Dowling students related personal experiences to me that would cause heads to roll if compiled into an expose by an enterprising reporter from the local newspaper.

From a third group of administrators who face the problem on a daily basis, I solicited suggestions for rectifying, or at least ameliorating the situation. For the most part these are seasoned administrators who deal with the substitute challenge day in and day out. Handling the needs of substitute teachers is a priority administrative assignment, in most secondary schools.

Following are the questions I asked secondary school administrators. Examination of the responses revealed patterns of difficulties, as well as some creative and practical suggestions that could benefit both substitute teachers and their students.

## RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE PUT TO SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

The questions set forth are as follows:

1. What are the most difficult problems that substitute teachers face?

- Lack of substantive lesson plan left for a substitute teacher to work with.
- Lack of respect demonstrated by students towards substitute teachers.
- Dealing with discipline problems.
- Lack of respect on the part of students. Students as a whole need to be "schooled" to what their expected behavior should be when a substitute teacher is in.



- Do not know the kids particularly well. Classroom management.
- Instructing properly if detailed lesson plans aren't left for class. Maintaining constant focus, behavior, classroom management.
- Not knowing the students. Not always being competent in the subject matter. Teachers leaving "non-sense" for the day's work.
- Relationships with the students that assist classroom management.
- Don't know the students. May not know subject (grades 7-12). Plans may be non-existent or incomplete. Not fully aware of school environment, policies, procedures, etc.
- Classroom management.
- Not knowing the students.

## 2. What can be done to alleviate these problems?

- We require all of our teachers to maintain a substitute folder containing substantive contingency lesson plans in the event they are absent and unable to phone their department director with current plans. Stern consequences to students demonstrating disrespect/insubordination towards substitute teachers. Provide subs with clear protocols/procedures for dealing with discipline matters.
- We have met with students by grade level and indicate to them that we expect their behavior to be exemplary for the substitute teacher, and in some cases, better than when their regular teacher is in.
- Hire substitutes on a more permanent departmental basis to provide them with more routine exposure to the same students.
- Well organized substitute plans. More strict discipline assessed on poor student behavior if it occurs with substitute.
- Valuable/meaningful work left for substitutes. An overview of each class make-up (helpful and difficult students).
- Developing more permanent substitutes instead of relying on per-diems. A "taxi-squad" serves multiple purposes: expertise by subject area, known to the students, helps them get involved in school life, and observing the talent pool closely for future openings.
- Permanent subs in buildings.

- Better training at the college level. An orientation program run by building administration.
- Print photo rosters (not just name rosters).

## 3. What teaching methodology works for substitute teachers?

- Ideally, a substitute will be certified in the area that they are asked to substitute for. In many cases, however, this is not the case and often times, substitute teachers serve as "babysitters" for 42 minutes, attempting to get students to do the work their regular teacher may have left.
- Teachers who view their assignment for the day as a teacher and not as a "babysitter". It is ironic that many of the subs want to eventually become teachers but cannot classroom-manage a class and many times lose control quite quickly. Our retired subs have no problems at all? (experience?)
- Multiple methods may lead to success. Usually contingent upon adequate planning and established expectations on the part of the regular teacher.
- Work based in independent practice. Respecting student knowledge and allowing them to support each other when addressing the content material.
- Keeping the routine as normal as possible.
- Methodology is of less importance, in my opinion, if the teacher is working out of area. However, in such circumstances, cooperative groups appear to allow for a productive class period.
- Cooperative group work with a purpose and product. Students will enjoy a more relaxed, cooperative environment, but the sub must know how to manage students in groups.
- Depends on the subject and the substitutes strengths.
- That's a good question....??

## 4. How should a substitute deal with a hostile student?

- Never by getting confrontational or loud with the student. If discipline with dignity fails, and the student has been warned to calm down/settle down yet refuses to do so, the substitute should use the classroom intercom phone to summon for security or an administrator to escort the student out of the classroom. A full report should be completed by the substitute and given to the regular teacher with a copy to the Assistant Principal (or Dean of Students).

- Speak to them in private in the hallway in a non-threatening manner. Explain to them they are there for them to be successful for the class. If they cannot improve once allowed "back" into class then the student must see the dean or administrator. A record (qualitative) must be left for the teacher for each period.
- Attempt to diffuse. If unsuccessful, immediately reach out to an administrator for assistance. Emergency phones in room for this purpose.
- Speak to them individually. Explain consequences of actions. If it persists, apply consequence.
- Write a referral if normal class management tactics don't work.
- Approach the student calmly - offer to discuss the situation away from other students. Offer the student choices - time out in another room, guidance. Call main office and ask for administrative assistance if the above fail.
- Be calm, non-confrontational and ask student to leave quietly to main office or to guidance.
- The word hostile would have to be defined. The substitute should enter their class and immediately get the lesson started. They need to set the tone that the class will be productive. Personality is a key quality for teachers or subs.
- Seek hall monitor assistance to escort student to the office.

It is not surprising that substitute teachers have definite preferences for particular districts, schools, and teachers. Some schools are simply better prepared than others to help substitutes by having in place proactive policies. Some teachers structure their lessons and forewarn their students of the possibility that they will have a substitute teacher. Youngsters in these classes know that work will be meaningful and that their participation and deportment will be evaluated. In such environments a substitute teacher can experience the professional growth for which he or she had signed on. And no one needs money so badly that he or she has to be demeaned in earning it. Paradoxically, it is in these popular districts, schools, and classes that there are fewer opportunities for substitutes because the absentee rate of regular teachers is low.

Major articles in the *New York Times* and in the *New York Post* lionized Frank Mickens, then principal of Boys' and Girls' High School in the Bedford Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, because he brought order and safety to the

school. Ramon Cortines, then Chancellor of the New York City School System, asked Mickens to bring his program for achievement, which presumed disciplined students, to schools throughout the city. Implicit in this request was the chancellor's conviction that an atmosphere of peace and security is a minimum requirement for learning to take place. This also applies to the substitute teacher situation: we must do what is necessary to create an atmosphere in which students assume that meaningful instruction will occur.

Certainly the time is not far off when observant citizens will note that many students spend 5 to 10 percent of their class time under the guidance of substitute teachers. If that time is lost, it is as if 5 to 10 percent of the school budget has been wasted; not good in the current fiscal crisis. Administrators will be more than embarrassed if well-planned programs to assist substitute teachers are not in place.

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## Book Review

### ***Transforming Schools with Technology How Smart Use of Digital Tools Helps Achieve Six Key Educational Goals***

***By Andrew A. Zucker, Harvard Educational Press,  
Cambridge, Mass. 02138, 2008***

In his veritable meta-analysis of the educational use of digital technology, *Transforming Schools with Technology*, Andrew A. Zucker, a senior research scientist at the Concord Consortium, asserts that the debate as to whether technology is a valuable tool has concluded that we should move beyond “techno-cheerleading,” and shift our focus to the leadership and vision needed to utilize effective and efficient technology to transform American education.

The author develops his arguments by drawing upon current information, derived from a near myriad of studies of the use of digital technologies, and what is known about “...how they affect teaching and learning in real schools.” Separate chapters address six key educational goals, including enhanced student achievement, attracting and retaining high-quality teachers, attention to English language learners and children with disabilities, and performance accountability.

Zucker further asserts that his text may soon be out-of-date, due to the new technologies which become constantly available but that, nonetheless, the trends described throughout this book will not abate; “...it is a pleasant utopian dream to believe that we will soon have the school systems we need....the reality is that an education system for 50 million students does not change quickly,” but that educational technology has the potential to provide essential tools for ongoing and continuous improvement of educational outcomes.

Educational leaders, policymakers and others interested in such improvement will appreciate this jargon-free treatise, which brings together much and most of what is known and thought about the timely topic of digital technology in education.

Reviewed by Dr. Charles W. Rudiger, Professor at Dowling College, Oakdale, N.Y.

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